

Burton E. Stevenson · Beatrice Ravenel · Winston Bouve

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SEPT. 1922

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Easier and Better
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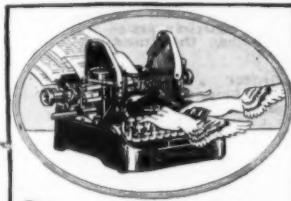
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A \$100 standard typewriter at a saving of over $\frac{1}{3}$! That alone is a sensational offer—but doubly so when the typewriter is the new Oliver Speedster, just announced as our latest and finest model. It is the most unique offer in typewriter history. Read about it below.

FREE TRIAL-EASY TERMS



The New OLIVER SPEEDSTER

Superiorities too numerous to list here make this today's super-typewriter a leader in its manufacture of fame. And to retain our new method of selling direct from the factory, thus enabling you to buy this \$100 Oliver for only \$65. A great business expert was right when he said, "The Oliver Typewriter Company has blazed a new trail in business practice—a new short-cut which saves the public millions." Mail the coupon now for a Free Trial Oliver or for further information. Check which.

To introduce the new Oliver Speedster we have decided to make this outright offer: We'll ship it to you for five days free trial. Don't send one penny in advance. Keep the Oliver or return it—as per the coupon below.

This is the only way for you to really appreciate the new-day advancements embodied in the Oliver Speedster. Mere print and pictures cannot adequately describe this super typewriter. You must see it and operate it to appreciate the surprising improvements and refinements.

You've never known a typewriter like this new model. It simply makes yesterday's standards out-of-date. For ease of operation it's a marvel, so speedy, so quiet, so light of touch. The kind of work it does is infinitely better. And for durability it stands supreme.

It comes as our *millionth* machine, with a history of 27 years of development. It comes from one of the largest con-

cerns in the country—and you deal direct, not roundabout. You therefore save the \$35 that it would otherwise cost to sell you an Oliver. If any typewriter is worth \$100, it is this new model. The latest usually brings a higher price—whatever it is. But we neither ask you to pay a premium nor to buy before satisfying yourself that this is the finest typewriter, regardless of price.

The coupon brings *either* the Free Trial Oliver or further information. Check which.

When the Oliver Speedster arrives, put it to every test. If you want to own it, send \$4 after trial, then \$4 per month. If you don't want it, ship it back at our expense. Free trial does not put you under the slightest obligation. Mail the coupon now. Become acquainted with the latest in typewriters.

The Oliver Typewriter Company
73-C Oliver Typewriter Bldg.,
Chicago, Ill.

Which?

* THE OLIVER TYPEWRITER COMPANY.

73-C Oliver Typewriter Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

Ship me now Oliver No. 11 typewriter for five days free inspection. If I keep it I will pay \$65 as follows: \$4 at the end of trial period and then at the rate of \$4 per month. The title to remain with me until I have paid \$65. If I do not keep it and return it to you, I am to deduct 10 per cent and remit to you \$56.00. If I do not keep it, I will ship it back at your expense at the end of five days.

My shipping point is.....

Do not send a machine until I order it. Mail me your book—The High Cost of Living and "The Reason and the Remedy," the Speedster catalog and further information.

Name.....

Street Address.....

City..... State.....

Occupation or Business.....

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

**PAY \$65
IF YOU WANT
ALL THAT
\$100 CAN
EVER BUY**

**THE
OLIVER
WAY**



**PAY \$100
IF YOU DONT
CARE TO
SAVE \$35**

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From \$100 a Month to \$8,000 a Year —and just beginning to grow!

Only one hundred a month—that was what Charles S. Jones, of El Paso, Texas, was drawing when he first took up home-study training under the LaSalle Problem Method.

Three years later comes a letter from "Henry & Jones, Certified Public Accountants, El Paso, Texas." "My income is a trifle in excess of \$8,000 a year," writes Jones, "and I am just beginning to grow. I can hardly find words to tell you of the inspiration that the course has given me."

His Chance is Yours!

A remarkable method of business training—the LaSalle Problem Method—and it gets *results*!

A. J. Klick, for example, writes that in three years' time his training in Higher Accountancy lifted him from a bookkeeper's job, at \$22 a week, to the position of comptroller of a good-sized New York corporation, at a salary of \$4,500 a year. Arthur J. Hammerl writes that LaSalle training increased his income 70 per cent in eight months. Other LaSalle members, literally thousands of them, tell of incomes doubled, tripled, even quadrupled, thru home study training under the LaSalle Problem Method.

If you are earnest when you say that you want to make more money, check the training that interests you, sign and mail the coupon NOW. It will bring you full particulars, together with details of our *convenient payment plan*; also your free copy of "Ten Years" Promotion in One."

Make your start toward that bigger job TODAY.

LaSalle Extension University
Dept. 965-HR Chicago, Illinois

Please send me catalog and full information regarding course and service I have marked with an X below. Also a copy of your book, "Ten Years' Promotion in One," all without obligation to me.

Higher Accounting Training for position as Auditor, **Comptroller**, Certified Public Accountant, Cost Accountant, etc.

Other LaSalle Training Courses

LaSalle is the largest business training institution in the world. It offers training for every important business need. If more interested in any of these courses, check here:

<input type="checkbox"/> Business Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Modern Business Correspondence and Practice
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<input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Personnel Management
<input type="checkbox"/> Railway Accounting and Station Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Expert Bookkeeping
<input type="checkbox"/> Law—Degree of LL. B.	<input type="checkbox"/> Business English
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Law	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Spanish
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Present Position.....

Address.....

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stands everywhere



A Big Raise in Salary!

Is Very Easy to Get, If You Go About It in the Right Way

You have often heard of others who have doubled and trebled their salaries in a year's time. You wondered how they did it. Was it a pull? Don't you think it. When a man is hired he gets paid for exactly what he does, there is no sentiment in business. It's preparing for the future and knowing what to do at the right time that doubles and trebles salaries.

Remember When You Were a Kid

and tried to ride a bike for the very first time? You thought that you would never learn and then—all of a sudden you knew how, and said in surprise: "Why it's a cinch if you know how." It's that way with most things, and getting a job with big money is no exception to the rule, if you know how.

We Will Show You How

Without loss to you of a single working hour we can show you a sure way to success and big pay. A large number of men in each of the positions listed are enjoying their salaries because of our help—we want to help you. Make check on the coupon against the job you want and we will help you to get it. Write or print your name on the coupon and send it in today.

American School

Dept. G.-64, Drexel Ave. and 58th St., Chicago

American School, Dept. G.-64, Drexel Ave., and 58th St., Chicago
Send me full information on the subject checked and how you will help me win success.

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.....Building Contractor
.....Automobile Engineer
.....Automobile Repairman
.....Civil Engineer
.....Structural Engineer
.....Business Manager
.....Cert. Public Accountant
.....Accountant and Auditor
.....Bookkeeper
.....Draftsman and Designer

.....Electrical Engineer
.....Electric Light and Power
.....General Education
.....Vocational Guidance
.....Business Law
.....Lawyer
.....Machine Shop Practice
.....Photoplay Writer
.....Mechanical Engineer
.....Shop Superintendent
.....Employment Manager

.....Steam Engineer
.....Foremanship
.....Sanitary Engineer
.....Surveyor (& Mapping)
.....Telephone Engineer
.....Telegraph Engineer
.....High School Graduate
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.....Wireless Radio
.....Undecided

Name..... Address.....

Classified Advertising

Agents and Help Wanted

BE A DETECTIVE. Excellent opportunity, good pay, travel. Write C. T. Ludwig, 436 Westover Building, Kansas City, Mo.

MEN—Age 17 to 55. Experience unnecessary. Travel: make secret investigations, reports. Salaries; expenses. American Foreign Detective Agency, 114, St. Louis.

DETECTIVES EARN BIG MONEY. Travel. Excellent opportunity. Experience unnecessary. Particulars free. Write, American Detective System, 1968 Broadway, N. Y.

WE START YOU IN BUSINESS, furnishing everything: men and women \$30 to \$100 weekly or monthly on our Supply Company stores' anywhere. Booklet free. W. Hillier Ragsdale, Drawer 29, East Orange, N. J.

BIG MONEY AND FAST SALES. Every owner buys gold initials for his auto. You charge \$1.50, make \$1.35. Ten orders daily easy. Write for particulars and free samples. American Monogram Co., Dept. 170, East Orange, N. J.

AGENTS, \$60 to \$200 a week. Free Samples. Gold Signs Letters for Stores and Office Windows. Any one can do it. Big demand. Liberal offer to general agents. Metallic Letter Co., 431T N. Clark St., Chicago.

BE A RAILWAY TRAFFIC INSPECTOR! \$110 to \$250 monthly, expenses paid after 3 months' share-time study. Splendid opportunity. Position guaranteed or money refunded. Write for Free Booklet CN-28, Stand. Business Training Inst., Buffalo, N. Y.

LARGE MANUFACTURER wants agents; sell advertised brand's shirts direct to wearer. No capital or experience required. Free samples. Madison Mills, 505 Broadway, New York.

\$75.00 to \$150.00 WEEKLY. Free samples. Lowest priced gold window letters for stores, offices and autos. Anybody can do it. Large demand. Exclusive territory. Acme Letter Co., 2860 Z. Congress, Chicago.

GOVT RAILWAY MAIL CLERKS start \$133 month; expenses paid. Specimen examinations gratis. Columbus Institute, B-3, Columbus, Ohio.

MEN WANTED to make Secret Investigations and reports. Experience unnecessary. Write J. Giar, Former Govt Detective, 120, St. Louis.

AGENTS WANTED to advertise our goods and distribute free samples to consumers. 90¢ per month. Write for full particulars. American Products Co., 3591 American Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio.

AGENTS—can make big profits introducing to business and club men the only practical mechanical pencil ever made; outlasts all others; sells on sight; pleasant association. Write Dura Pen Co., 115 Broad St., New York City.

AGENTS: Brand-new novelty, "Klik-It," the cigarette holder with new and unique features, including patented ejector. Sell's like wild-fire; even cigarette smokers. Quick profits for the first in your territory. Write for special proposition. Dept. A-12, Fedco Sales Co., 151 Odgen Ave., Jersey City, N. J.

\$135 MONTH commence. Railway Mail Clerks. Steady work. List positions free. Write today. Franklin Institute, Dept. G2, Rochester, N. Y.

Astrology

BE WISE! BE CHEERFUL! BE PROSPEROUS! New way plan brings wonderful results. Valuable pointers and your personality revealed for 10 cents and birthdate. Thomson-Haywood, Dept. 300, Chronicle Bldg., San Francisco, Cal.

FUTURE YOURS FORETOLD: Send dime, birthdate, honest, reliable, convincing trial reading. Erwing, Box 1129, Sta. C, Los Angeles, Cal.

PARISIAN lady, celebrated Psycho-Medium, complete life reading. Send birthdate, hair and dollar bill. Madame de Marcellac, 330A St. Andre, Montreal, Canada.

Help Wanted—Female

\$6—\$18 a dozen decorating pillow tops at home; experience unnecessary; particulars for stamp. Tapestry Paint Co., 110 La Grange, Ind.

LADIES do your own hemstitching and piecing; attachment fits any machine. \$2.50. Buttonhole \$4. Hand embroidered \$2.50. Agents wanted. Stephenson, 22 Quincy, Chicago.

Patents and Lawyers

INVENTORS: desiring to secure patents should write for our guide-book "How To Get Your Patent." Send sketch or description for our opinion of its patentable nature. Randolph & Co., Dept. 412, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS. Highest references. Rates reasonable. Best results. Prominence assured. Booklet free. Watson E. Coleman, Patent Lawyer, 623 F Street, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS. Write for Record of Invention Blank and free guide book. Send model or sketch and description for free opinion of its patentable nature. Highest references. Prominence. Attention: Reasonable. Person: Victor J. Evans & Co., 787 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

INVENTIONS WANTED. Cash or Royalty for ideas. Adam Fisher Mfg. Co., 223 St. Louis, Mo.

PATENTS: Trademark, Copyright, Instructive pamphlet free. Correspondence solicited. Results procured. Charges reasonable. Metzger, Dept. U, Washington.

Automobiles

AUTOMOBILE Mechanics. Owners, Garzonians, Repairs, send for free copy America's Popular Motor Magazine. Contains helpful instructions on overhauling, ignition, wiring, carburetors, batteries, etc. Automobile Digest, 530 Butler Bldg., Cincinnati.

Miscellaneous

HEMSTITCHING and piecing attach- ment works on any sewing machine, easily adjusted. Price \$2.50 with full instructions. Oriental Novelty Co., Box 11, Corpus Christi, Texas.

Stammering

ST-STU-T-T-TERING And Stammering At Home. Instructive booklet free. Walter McDonnell, 80 Potomac Bank Building, Washington, D. C.

Short Stories and Photoplays

WRITE NEWS ITEMS and Short Stories for pay in spare time. Copyright Book and prints free. Press, Reporting Syndicate (406), St. Louis, Mo.

WRITE PHOTOPLAYS: \$25—\$300 paid any one for suitable idea. Experience unnecessary; copy or outline free. Products League, 439 St. Louis.

FREE to writers—A wonderful little book of money-making hints, suggestions, ideas: the A B C of successful Story and Movie writing. Absolutely Free. Just address Authors' Press, Dept. 89, Auburn, N. Y.

WRITERS! Stories, Poems, Plays, etc., are wanted for publication. Literary Bureau, 175, Hannibal, Mo.

PHOTOPLAYS WANTED for California Producers; also stories. Submit manuscripts, or, if a beginner, write for Free Plot Chart and Details. Harvard Company, 556, San Francisco.

AMBITIOUS WRITERS—send today for Free copy America's leading magazine for writers of photoplays, stories, poems, songs, instructive, helpful. Writer's Digest, 693 Butler Building, Cincinnati.

Songs, Poems, etc.

SONGWRITERS! Learn of the public's demand for songs suitable for dancing and the opportunities greatly changed conditions offer new writers, obtainable only in our "Songwriter's Manual & Guide" send for your copy for song writers at once for free criticism and advice. We revise poems, compose music, secure copyright and facilitate free publication or outright sale of songs. Kuhlerbacher Studios, 384 Galey Bldg., New York.

WONDERFUL PROPOSITION for song poems or melody writers. Ray Hibbler, D-102, 4040 Dickens Ave., Chicago.

WRITE THE WORDS FOR A SONG. We compose music. Our Chief of Staff wrote many big hits—Submit your song—poem to us at once. New York City only Corp., 482 Fitzgerald Bldg., New York.

GOOD Songs and song poems wanted, poems set to classy music. Send 12¢ stamps for wonderful song and be convinced of results. Sunset Melody, P. O. Box 70, Music-Art Bldg., 233 So. Broadway, Los Angeles, Cal.

Home Employment Evenings

START Little Mail Order business anywhere. Home employment evenings. Stamp brings instruction. Albert Pier, 72 Cortlandt Street, New York.

Farm Lands

LAND SEEKERS. \$10 to \$50 starts you on 20, 40, or 80 acres near thriving city in lower Michigan. Balance long time. Investigate. Write for free illustrated booklet giving full information. Swigart Land Co., X-1285 First National Bank Building, Chicago.

Typewriters

TYPEWRITERS. All Makes. Save one-half. Thoroughly rebuilt in our factory by the famous name "Pronto." Fully guaranteed. Free trial. We handle all standard makes. Cash or easy terms. Write for catalog. Young Typewriter Co., Dept. 462, Chicago, Ill.

Vaudeville

GET ON THE STAGE. I tell you how! Send stamp for instructive Stage Book and particulars. K. La Delle, Box 557, Los Angeles, Cal.



An Amazingly Easy Way to Earn \$10,000 a Year

Let Me Show You How FREE

To the average man the \$10,000 a year job is only a dream. Yet today there are a surprising number of men earning five figure salaries who were merely dreaming of them a short while ago. The secret of their success should prove a startling revelation to every ambitious man who has ever aspired to get into the \$10,000-a-year class.

There is nothing "different" about the man whose salary runs into five figures. He is made of the same stuff as you and I. For example, take J. P. Overstreet, of Denison, Texas. A few short years ago he was a police officer earning less than \$1,000 a year. Today his earnings are in excess of \$1,000 a month—more than \$12,000 a year. C. W. Campbell, Greensburg, Pa., was formerly a railroad employee on a small salary—last month his earnings were \$1,562.

Why Don't YOU Get Into The Selling Field?

Read These Amazing Stories of Success
Earned \$524 in Two Weeks
I took my course last month and earned \$60 a month. Last week I cleared \$216 and this week \$218. —G. W. Kearns, Oklahoma City, Okla.

I Now Earn as High as
I took your course two years ago. Was earning \$15 a week cleaning houses. Now I am one of the largest firms in the U. S. I have earned more than \$100 in a day. —J. E. Campbell, Sales Manager, J. E. Campbell, Chicago, Ill.

Earned \$1,562 in Thirty Days
My earnings for the past thirty days have been \$1,562. I won Second Prize in March although I only worked two weeks during that month. —C. W. Campbell, Greensburg, Pa.

Earned \$1,000 in Six Weeks
I have earned \$1,000, \$1,500, over \$1,000 and over \$1,000 for the last six weeks, which last week I earned \$1,500. I have travel eleven months out of the year and work 5 days each month.

The N. S. T. A. is the secret of a rut where I was earning less than \$1,000 a year and showed me how to get out of it. —J. P. Overstreet, Denison, Texas.

to magnificent earnings, to fascinating careers and big selling positions.

We Train You And Help You Land A Job

What these men have done, you can do! In your spare time at home you can easily master the secrets of selling that make Master Salesmen. Whatever your experience has been—whatever you may be doing now—whether or not you think you can sell—just answer this question: Are you ambitious to earn \$10,000 a year? Then send me your name quick! I will prove to you without cost or obligation that you can easily become a Master Salesman. I will show you how the Salesmanship Training and Free Employment Service of the N. S. T. A. will help you to wonderful success in Selling.

Free Book on Salesmanship

Just mail the coupon or write for our great Illustrated Book, "Modern Salesmanship" which we will send you free. Let us prove to you that regardless of what you are doing now you can quickly become a Master Salesman. Let us show you how you too, can step into the ranks of the big money makers of business. See how easily you can learn this fascinating, big pay profession at home in your spare time. Learn what we have done for others and what we stand ready to do for you. Don't put it off until to-morrow—write us today. Mail the coupon at once.

National Salesmen's Training Association

Dept. 4-M, Chicago, Ill., U. S. A.

National Salesmen's Training Association

Dept. 4-M, Chicago, Ill., U. S. A.

Please send me, without any obligation on my part, your free book "Modern Salesmanship" and full information about the N. S. T. A. system of Salesmanship Training and Employment Service. Also a list showing lines of businesses with openings for salesmen.

Name.....

Street.....

City..... State.....

Age..... Occupation.....

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

Suppose You Want to Break Into the Movies

The question you ask yourself is: "Just what are *my* chances? It doesn't help me very much to read about how Mary Pickford and Charlie Chaplin got *their* start—what I want to know is, ought *I* to try to break in? Have *I* the qualifications? And if so, just *how* ought *I* to go about it to begin?"

We have prepared a book that answers those questions *definitely*, and *authoritatively*. It is made up of articles that have appeared from time to time in PICTURE-PLAY MAGAZINE, each one of which was the result of painstaking investigation by a writer who is a specialist and who knows his or her subject. Nowhere else can you find set forth as completely, clearly, and frankly the real facts about getting into the movies, particularly in regard to *your own particular case*. The book is called

"Your Chance as a Screen Actor"

It contains ninety-six pages of information, by which you will be able definitely to decide whether or not the screen is to be your profession.

This book is only 20 cents a copy.

To procure one, address the book department,

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79 Seventh Avenue, New York City

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CASH OR CREDIT

Genuine Diamonds GUARANTEED
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We invite comparisons. You will be convinced that you can do better with **LOFTIS**. Our **IMMENSE BUYING POWER** for our Chain of Stores and our large Mail Order House enables us to make lower prices on small concerns.

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BARGAINS Selected from our "All Best Selections." Diamonds set in white gold, white, perfect cut. Mountings are all solid Gold. Purchases of \$100.00 and up on any price you wish.

Order by Mail

DIAMONDS 1—White Gold, \$100. 2—Yellow Gold, \$200. 3—White Gold, \$250. 4—Gold with White Gold prongs, \$75. 5—White Gold, plain set in White Gold, \$80. 6—White Gold, \$100. 7—White Gold, \$125. 8—White Gold, \$150. 9—White Gold, \$200. 10—White Gold, \$250. 11—Gold filled, guaranteed 25 years, \$100. 12—White Gold, \$150. Credit Terms: One-half down, the balance in equal payments within eight months. Send for Catalog.

LOFTIS
BROS. & CO., LTD.
103 N. State Street, Chicago, Ill.
Stores in Leading Cities

YOUR NEWS DEALER

maintains his store at considerable expense. He must pay for help, rent and lighting. He carries many articles that you would never dream of ordering direct from manufacturers, and is, therefore, of great service when you need a newspaper, a cigar or a box of stationery. Then why not give him all of your custom and so help make his business profitable?

Tell him to show you samples of AINSLEE'S, POPULAR, PEOPLE'S STORY, DETECTIVE STORY, PICTURE-PLAY, TOP-NOTCH, WESTERN STORY and LOVE STORY magazines. Select those you want and he will gladly deliver them to your residence regularly.

Then, when you want something good to read, you will not have to search for it.

Discounting the Count

ACOUNT used to be a man in charge of a count of 500 persons to whom he was a sort of overlord. This is not true today because of altered political conditions. We still have Counts, but the Count business has changed somewhat.

Business, of all kinds, has undergone something of a revolution. It was not so many years ago that pack peddlers were the sole distributors and transporters of many of the household articles of the day. Their legs set the limits for most distribution problems in those days.

Modern transportation, progressive sales methods—and advertising—have broken the shackles of time. They make a speedy job of what used to take years. Through advertising many an article has been introduced simultaneously in stores all over the country.

Advertising today is the method used by business to tell you why you should have certain goods and how to identify those goods. The advertisements you find here are a truthful *catalog* of needed merchandise.

Articles of all kinds and for all purposes are presented in a pleasant way through the medium of type and picture. The outstanding requirements of every member of the family are met by offers of good merchandise of proved value.



*Use the advertisements for guidance and
you will be a constant gainer.*

Radio Course FREE

My new \$45.00 Radio Course given free when you enroll for the Electrical Course. Mail coupon.



Be an

Get Ready
For a Big
Pay Job

Electrical Expert

Men like you are needed right now to fill big-paying jobs in the electrical field. There never was a time when opportunities for money-making were as good as they are now. Good jobs are open everywhere to men who know "what's what." Electrical Experts earn from \$12 to \$30 a day. Even the ordinary electricians get top-notch pay. Why don't you get in on this and get a real man's size job now? With my simplified Electrical Course I can quickly fit you to hold one. Read W. E. Pence's letter below. This is only one of thousands of such letters I have received.

You Can Be a Big Money Maker

I have trained over 20,000 men in electricity—thousands of successful men all over the world attribute their success to my training. I can make you successful too. In fact I will guarantee your success. If you will follow my home study course you can become an expert, drawing a fat salary, in the same time it takes you to get a little raise in the work you are doing now.

Jumps **\$125**
From **\$125**
A Month to
\$750 and
Over

READ
the Story of
W. E. Pence

W. E. Pence
in his working togs



Chehalis, Wash.,
Oct. 9, 1921

Mr Cooke:—
When I enrolled with you less than a year ago I was a common mechanic earning \$25 to \$30 a week. Today I am an "Electrical Expert" with a business of my own that gives me a clear profit of over \$750 a month.

I have more work than I can do. The people around Chehalis come to me to fix their starters, generators and ignition troubles because they know that I know how to do it right.

My success, I owe to you, Mr. Cooke. The thorough practical training which you gave me through your Easily-learned Home Study Course in Electricity has made me an independent, highly respected business man in this community. Sincerely yours, W. E. Pence.

Age or Lack of Education No Handicap

No matter how old or how young you are, or what education you have, there is a real future for you in electricity. If you can read and write I can put you on the road to success. I can help you to a position that will make people admire you and look up to you.

Cash In On Your Spare Time

Use your spare time to get a better job. Most of us have enough spare time every day to sell a little at about \$10.00 an hour. Sell some to yourself at this price. Watch how quick you will earn the money back if you put the time into study.

Electrical Working Outfit Free

Every man who enrolls for my electrical course gets a big outfit of tools, material and instruments free. This includes an electric motor and other things not usually found in a beginner's outfit. These are the same tools and the same material you will use later in your work. Everything practical and good right from the start.

L. L. COOKE, Chief Engineer
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WORKS, Dept. 76
2150 Lawrence Ave., Chicago

*Earn
\$75 to \$200
a week*

I Guarantee Your Complete Satisfaction

I am sure I can make a big pay electrical expert out of you that I guarantee your success. I agree under bond to return every cent you pay me for tuition when you have finished the course, if you are not satisfied that it is the best investment you have ever made. If you don't make good, this million dollar institution will.

Act Right Now

Let me send you my big free book giving details of the opportunities electricity offers you and a sample lesson also free. Mail the coupon and get this at once. Learn how other men "got themselves ready to hold good paying jobs" and how I can help you do the same. This is your big chance—take it.

L. L. COOKE
Chief Engineer, Chicago
Engineering Works,
Dept. 76, 2150 Lawrence Ave.,
Chicago, Ill.

Dear Sir: Send at once Sample Lesson, your Big Book, and full particulars of your Free Outfit and Home Study Course—all fully prepaid without obligation on my part.

Name.....
Address.....

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COLT .25 CAL.
Cartridges
Retail Value \$22.50
A beautiful little
pocket gun. Shoots
2 times .25 cal. net
Jacobs Luller. Checked grips
and safety lever. Small and compact,
doesn't bulge in the pocket.
GET OUR CATALOG

**THE FAMOUS
.32 NINE"**

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REGULAR
VALUE
\$35.00

ONLY
\$1150

361

DIAMONDS

Here at 60%
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7/8—3/32 ct. at \$52.50 among bargains
in revolution. Many other big and
little diamonds. Buy HERE! Prices based on loan values
not market values. This 76 year old diamond
banking firm has thousands of unpaid loans
and other bargains. Must sell NOW.
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Any diamond sent for absolutely free examination at our risk. No obligation. No cost to you.
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Described Diamond Bargains in detail, gives guaranteed
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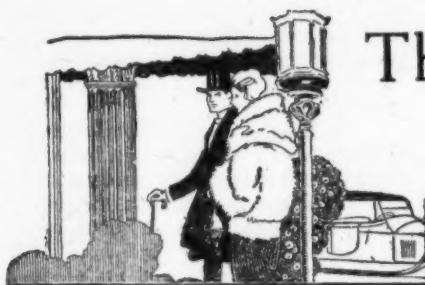
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The Gray Path

By Izola Forrester

Author of "The World at His Feet,"
"Beloved Son of —" etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE *Kraaken*, Randy Sears' million-dollar cruiser yacht, had slipped leisurely down the east coast of Florida for several days, waiting for Randy to make up his mind as to its ultimate destination.

Randy had a party of men friends aboard. They had played cards since dinner as usual, and consumed private stock until Beatrice Sears' nerves were at the snapping point. Just one more game, one more night, and she felt she would lose the steady, resolute grip she had kept on herself since the day she had married Randy.

The drone of voices at the card table came clearly through the window, and then the sound of Carter Lewis' sudden, high-pitched laughter. Randy had lost again! She turned away to the rail at the stern of the yacht. It was quiet here. The glory of the Southern night calmed her with its silence and splendor. The moon threw a path of changing mother-of-pearl over the sea. It seemed to hang low in the wake of the boat, a huge, slumberous, tropic moon at the full. She leaned on the rail, her fingers pressing her throbbing temples, trying to think, to find a way out.

She had been married three years. A firm upholder of monopoly in business, Randy had extended his principles to married life. In the name of marital devotion, he had assumed a monopoly over her entire existence. To keep her with him as much as possible had been his idea of an everlasting honeymoon. He did not care for society. He was too irremediably lazy to exert himself. He hated to see other men interested in her. He was young, stout, cheerful, devoted. He had drifted into a state of ease and contentment, given her unlimited credit, and believed he was making her happy.

If it had not been for the others, her mother and Rex, she would have broken away that first year of deadly monotony and awakening in herself. She liked to think it was something of her father's spirit that had stirred her to rebellion then. He had been Major Clive Farnsworth, killed in a Moro uprising in the Philippines in her childhood. After a tempestuous youth, spent in the espousal of various lost causes over the face of the earth, he had fallen desperately in love with Madeline la Tour, a New Orleans beauty. His sudden death left her an attractive widow with two chil-

dren, Rex and Beatrice, and no money with which to launch either.

Life had become a succession of compromises. Beatrice closed her eyes, remembering with a bitter little smile the years in Washington with her father's aunt. Her mother had finally left her there, taking Rex to Italy with her. Rex had always been her favorite. Not that she had cared. At least, she was free from her mother's hysteria and incessant quarrels with her aunt who, in her way, had tried to be kind to Beatrice for her father's sake. She had died just before the return of Mrs. Farnsworth from abroad.

When the latter found out that Mrs. Desart had outwitted her even at the last, by leaving all her fortune to charity, she had refused flatly even to come on to Washington. Beatrice had been brought to New York by one of the teachers from her school. She always remembered the relieved expression on her mother's face as she stepped into the reception room of the conservative family hotel.

"Thank goodness, Bea, you have looks!"

No sentiment, no quick, enraptured embrace. She could almost feel sorry for the slender, lonely girl, in mourning, who had expected so much. In less than a year, she had been successfully married to Randy Sears, whose special virtue was that his mother's family continued to reside in Pittsburgh and produce unlimited wealth for Randy to spend.

Married life had become a sort of slow torture, the continual dropping of water, the incessant sounding of one minor note, the nerve-racking agony of perpetual confinement, with Randy as cell mate. And gradually there had come to her one dream of relief. If she could escape!

Most women who plan to run away from husbands have a definite object ahead of them, usually another man.

She had no such excuse. She was merely fed up with the unending monotony of her whole existence; with the tension of waiting for Randy's next yawn, his next game of bridge, his next drink. The longing to find herself free had become almost an obsession. She found herself sitting opposite Randy, hungering for the sight of strange faces, of new scenes, new interests, new opportunities.

If she had been an emotional, primitive type of woman, she might have relieved the tension by temperamental storms, but she shrank from the usual feminine hysteria. One of her reasons for yielding to Randy had been her dread of her mother's wild fits of despondency on the first of each month, with the arrival of bills, and the turbulent life of a family who were in a continual state of nerves from living beyond their means.

She had inherited all of her father's love for adventure and the lure of the unexpected. After those early days in the islands with their vivid, colorful life in her blood, life with Randy had been intolerable. He was not brutal or unfaithful to her. He was even fatuously fond of her. He had been most generous to Mrs. Farnsworth and Rex. She remembered the last scene in the twelve-thousand-dollar-a-year apartment they were enjoying now. Her mother had told her forcibly that she had no possible grounds for a divorce.

"Randy's devotion to you makes him a perfect joke. See how he has lightened my burden. Look at all he has done for poor, dear Rex. You have everything that money can buy, and an adoring husband, and you're a restless, discontented woman, Bea, ready to fling aside the sacred obligations you assumed!"

Beatrice had laughed at her almost sneeringly.

"Please don't couple the word sacred with anything pertaining to my married

life, Mother. And don't have any emotional regrets on my account. One reason I was glad to marry when I did was to escape the scenes at Graystone. The flat truth is, Randy looked like the golden calf to all of us, and we fell down and worshiped him. But it happens that I am the one who has to live with him, and his stupidity suffocates me. It's either divorce—or something worse!"

The shocked expression on Mrs. Farnsworth's face had been delicious, she thought now.

"Are you threatening me with a scandal, Bea?"

"No, darling. Merely a suicide. Don't worry, though. Randy never lets me out of his sight. We're going on a five months' cruise now. I didn't mean to frighten you, dear, truly. I had half an idea you might understand. And—well, you didn't, that's all. I'll promise always to think first of you and Rex."

She had left Randy that night to doze over his coffee and liqueurs, clear-headed, resentful. She would not go with him, she had told herself. She would disappear, take up life somewhere under another name, find work, relief, peace.

The memory of her father came to her to-night as it had then. He would have understood. He never would have united her to a man like Randy Sears, "condemned to live," she thought bitterly. The call came to her as it had to her father. Travel, to Randy, simply meant putting to sea in a well-stocked yacht with some card-playing cronies, and the chance to eat and sleep as much as he liked. To her, it meant the lure of lifting billows for days and days at sea, of finding golden deserts and caravans, widening deltas, mysterious islands.

Mrs. Farnsworth had told Rex what she had said, and his words came back to her now.

"You are cutting up nicely, Bea. Why

don't you think of mother and me? If you kick up a mess, Randy'll stop our income. I think it's beastly rotten and selfish of you. I hate a quitter, and if I thought you were mixed up with anybody else, I'd tell Randy myself."

Randy's voice called her name now from the cabin. She left the moonlit stern and went slowly back to join him, aloof and bored. He was losing, and insisted on her playing with him to change his luck. As she looked down at him, a strange, nauseating revolt stirred in her. This man was her husband, her mate, her lover, this smiling, expressionless face, the heavy, dull eyes seeking hers, the thick, characterless lips. She thought suddenly of the gray, moonlit path at the wake of the ship.

"If I win, you must pay me," she said.

She took her seat and played quietly. Her right to freedom! That was her secret stake, and she won steadily. She was cheating him. He would be good to her mother and Rex, she told herself. But she would cheat him of herself. Possibly, after he had found out her way of escape, he might understand the horror life with him had become.

The crew of the *Kraaken* followed their owner's lead. Even the sailor standing night watch aft had strolled forward to watch a game. Beatrice moved slowly, deliberately, as she stepped from the cabin, a little smile on her lips, her eyes seeking the shimmering gray path of molten silver that widened into a beckoning perspective behind the yacht.

She stepped over the coils of rope to the narrow cushioned seat, poised for a second, and slipped over the rail into the sea.

CHAPTER II.

From the darkness beyond the moon path there shot forward a motor boat, gray, high-prowed, menacing as the lifted head of a shark in its sudden

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appearance. The yacht glided away from them, a shadow overlaced with light, a sportive presence in this mystical sea of strange mother-of-pearl mists haunting the horizon line, and a moon that draped itself in saffron, like some ancient courtesan, and hesitated on the threshold of the night.

As Beatrice rose to the surface she felt, instead of a passive drifting into death and oblivion, a fierce revulsion. She was young and strong. The will to live seized her, dominated her above even the fate that she had sought voluntarily. But the great underswell drew her under like a bit of wreckage and she lost consciousness in a swirling world where hope and fear alike found solvency.

Reluctantly she felt herself struggling back to sentient realization of her surroundings. No silver sea of sweet forgetfulness, cessation of mental tension and all the vivid memory of her daily life, but a stumbling, frantic battle with some one who was forcing her back to pain and understanding. She felt herself trying to push away arms that held her, the strongest, most inescapable arms she had ever felt. A voice forced itself on her hearing, compelling her to listen by its reiteration. She felt the trickle of cool liquid down her lips and chin, and woke to sobbing, indignant hate of this torturer.

As she broke into moaning, gasping cries he laid her back on the seat, and turned to the yacht, now a line of fairy lights flecked against the darkness ahead. It was still within hearing. He took a revolver from the locker to fire an alarm, when he felt her hands clutching at his half-raised arm.

"Don't, don't do that! I'd rather die."

There was a depth of agonized appeal in her eyes that told him more than her outcry. His eyes half closed as he stared at the yacht, remembering the second of time when he had discerned

the dark silhouette of a woman's form standing poised at its stern. She had been deliberate then, he figured. Voluntarily she had chosen this way of escape—from what? His gaze scanned again the huddled, half-clothed figure. Her evening gown had slipped from her shoulders in that last struggle with the waves. Her hair was loosened, a wet, indistinguishable mass over her bare shoulders. Her youth was the one perfect impression he had of her in the shadowy light.

The boat with lashed wheel and shut-off power had drifted about, following the turn of the tide toward the distant shore line as if it, too, had been drawn, like the woman, into the mysteriously magnetic path of the moon.

It had been Beatrice's fear that he would try to signal the yacht without her knowledge. She lay with closed eyes, apparently exhausted, when he took blankets from the locker and wrapped them about her. Her head on the curve of his arm, she drank the brandy he offered again, and noticed with a curious distinctness, that it was in the small silver top of a flask. His voice, too, when it had called to her to fight against the sea of gray, had been of her own kind.

He was young and powerfully built. She could see him as he took the wheel. The boat leaped to the touch of his hand. Weak from shock, she felt the droning hypnotism of the motor's throbbing, the surety that they were going toward shore, away from Randy, away from all that meant existence to her not half an hour before. She sank into a drifting haze of semiconsciousness until the boat slowed down in the rocky cove of a small key.

"Don't move! I'll carry you." His tone was sharp as she started to rise. Gratefully enough she relaxed into his arms when he lifted her and stepped up to the roughly constructed landing—a few strips of planking on the shak-

iest kind of piling. It gave under their weight as he bore her to the shore.

Silver and black again, she thought, silver night, black shadows of the trees which, blending, gave her a gray world of indecision except for the moon, curiously golden, almost orange. It gave the keynote to the night, glorifying its monotony with a challenge of beauty. As they turned up a path from the rocky beach, she looked back over his arm at the ocean. The lights of the *Kraaken* were lost in the furtive mist that trailed along the horizon.

He laid her on a couch in the small, one-room hut which seemed to crown the highest point of the islet. Taking pongee pajamas from a wardrobe fashioned of curtains and hangers, he tossed them to her, and struck a light in the swinging lamp over the table.

"Put those on," he ordered. "I can heat up some clam broth if you want it. How do you feel?"

"Queer." She pressed her fingers to her temples, looking at him in the sudden light. He was staring back at her with frank puzzlement and resentment at her intrusion. Young, startlingly good looking, a man of unmistakable breeding, yet his clothes were the make-shifts of a beach comber. Above all, she felt that she was unwelcome. There was nothing to fear from a man whose eyes held merely inquiry and annoyance. Suddenly he walked to the door and scanned the darkness seaward. She saw a close-lipped smile deepen the lines of his face.

"What is it?" she asked. "Can you see anything of the yacht?"

He pointed his leveled finger at the play of a searchlight across the eastern sky. They watched it in silence, Beatrice tense and chilled as the slender shaft flitted back and forth fanwise across the blackness, lighting up the waves where it fell. To her nervous fancy it seemed like some supernatural finger seeking her through space, point-

ing to her, telling Randy that she was there, safe for him to recover, to seize and drag back into his detested embrace. The man beside her spoke, without looking at her.

"What boat is that?"

He used Spanish, the language she had known in her childhood out in the islands. It thrilled her to hear it again, bringing back oddly the comforting memory of the old life with her father. Yet she hesitated. How could she trust him with the truth? He would notify Randy that she was alive. She lied to him, giving the name of a shore-coasting steamer they had passed that day, bound for Havana. He glanced down at her intently.

"Why do you lie to me? I won't signal to it. It is not *La Esposito*. It is a private American yacht. Why did you jump off it?"

"Why were you following it at night without lights?"

He smiled, and answered her in English.

"You are clever, my lady of the moon. I followed to find out what kind of boat it was. I expected a caller. This key is low and hard to locate by night."

"Are we near the mainland?"

"Not too near." He smiled at her, a baffling, quizzical smile.

Beatrice drew several rings from her left hand.

"I have no money, but I will give you these to pay for your trouble. When can you take me to the mainland?"

"I never visit the mainland, on principle. The climate disagrees with me."

Her eyes met his in a clash of wills, questioning, suspicious, antagonistic.

"How am I to reach it alone?"

"You cannot. You will stay here. It is not my choice that you have become my guest, but since you are here you will have to stay."

She went back to the couch and sat there in silence. There was a settled finality about his words that aroused

her curiosity. Why was he here on this lonely key out of the main track of steamers? Why had he gone out at midnight in the motor boat trailing after a chance yacht unless he expected something to happen, something prearranged? Supplies, possibly. He would have to get gasoline for the boat, provisions for himself, and he had said he never visited the mainland.

She tried to remember how far the *Kraaken* had been out from Key West, but Randy's whims had led them along roundabout sea lanes out of the regular course of the coast steamers. And at the thought of her husband, a quick resentment came to her. Had she escaped from the bondage of one man to find herself checked at the outset of her freedom by another man's whims? His steady, ironical gaze combated her own as she turned to him again.

"Who are you?"

"Who are you?"

"If I tell you, will you take me to the mainland?"

"No."

"Then may I at least be alone?"

"I assure you, you are absolutely as much alone as if you were the sole person here," he smiled. "You will find everything you may need. There are cigarettes in that box on the table, food in the cupboard. If you will feel safer with a revolver, take mine." He tossed it over the foot of the couch. "Good night."

Furious at his manner, yet thrilled and interested as she had never been in her life before, by the strangeness of the situation and her surroundings, Beatrice rose when the door shut behind him. She had escaped from Randy to find herself the prisoner, perforce, of a most unwilling keeper. She waited a few minutes, then stepped to the entrance to look out and see if the searchlight still showed.

The splendor of the Southern night, the surge of the incoming tide on the

shore, cries of tropical birds before dawn in the fringe of scattered trees, the lonely grandeur and safety of this isle of refuge, it was all she had longed for. But the man himself baffled her. What mystery lay back of his life on this bit of coral rock? Did he have companions whom she must meet? Stories of the Southern coast came back to her, the revenue runners plying from the mainland to the Indies, dropping off their goods at some hidden cove where they would be picked up later by launches. She had heard Randy tell of these things.

As Randy's name recurred to her, all fear of her immediate environment or fate left her, leaving merely the dread that he might learn of her rescue and find her again. She fell asleep, her head pillow'd on one upflung arm.

The man watched from a rocky tooth that jutted out below the hut. Smoking leisurely, relaxed at full length along the rock, he waited until the play of the searchlight seemed to falter. Aimlessly it swept to and fro, hesitant, regretfully almost, until it paled before the rising dawn glow in the east, and ceased. The *Kraaken* had given up the search.

CHAPTER III.

The sunlight wakened her. It seeped through every slit and hole of the roughly constructed hut. She had changed her wet clothing for the pajamas the night before, and hesitated over her toilet. Her silk underwear had dried, her evening gown was a shred of shrunken georgette and bedraggled lace. Her black-satin slippers were ruined and shapeless. She finally made a compromise, and emerged into the dazzling sunshine, barefooted, with the pajamas still her main covering.

After pausing cautiously to look about her, she discovered the man sleeping restfully, healthily, under some palmettos near by. There was a path up

over the rocks. She climbed it and found she could survey the entire islet. It was hardly more than a nesting place for sea birds, a slender crescent of coral reef with a scattering of trees, sudden, deep, sandy hollows, a sheltered cove where the motor boat lay at its landing, and all about the restless ocean.

The hut was the sole sign of habitation, but its tenant had evidently used all his ingenuity to make it livable. She realized how completely she was at the mercy of his courtesy and mood.

Lingering, she drew in full, deep breaths of the sea air. It had never seemed like the real ocean to her before, as she had seen it from the deck of the yacht or the verandas of a shore hotel. Here it was itself, primitive, resistless, luring. Something flashed dreamily through her mind, a line from Swinburne's "Tristram":

And all the sea lay subject to the sun.

That had been the morning of their awakening, Iseult and Tristram on the rocky coast of Cornwall. She had loved the poem and the magic of the opera's music, but this was reality, this coast of curious, upreared coral rocks, this murmurous, wooing sea that seemed to sweep from her consciousness all limitations, all the old inhibitions. She closed her eyes, her face uplifted, her hands clasped closely on her breast, all her being one deep, unspoken votive offering to whatever force had brought her here.

A whistle came to her suddenly, and she answered it. He had prepared breakfast on a table of two boards placed outside the hut under the palmettos. She ran halfway down the path, then checked herself to a walk. He looked her over with quick criticism.

"There's an old raincoat in the boat locker if you want it. It'll be hot to wear, though. I have canvas shoes, but they'd be too large for you. I'll knock

the heels off your slippers. They'll save your feet from the sand."

She sat down to the table with a good appetite. He had made coffee, and fried some passable drop cakes of corn meal, with bacon. He watched her with amused eyes, realizing, under her haughtiness, her embarrassment.

"You know, by and by, you will be glad to make yourself a native dress of palm fiber," he teased. "Since we are victims of propinquity through no fault of our own, don't you think it would be more sportsmanlike of you to face the situation with a decent grace?"

"You make excellent coffee." She lifted her gaze to his over the rim of the cup. "And I like your food. I hope you keep well supplied."

"We won't go hungry, I can vouch for that. Will you have more coffee? By the way, what's your name?"

"What is yours?" she parried. "No more. I want a cigarette, please."

He held a match for her, and threw it over his shoulder, his eyes half closed against the glare of the sand.

"Suppose we choose each other's names. Here we have all the setting and material for an island affair. We may write the play to suit ourselves, act the parts as we please. The world has always presupposed and firmly believed that romance is inevitable where any kind of man and woman are thrown together on a desert isle. So did you last night. Do you still feel yourself in danger of being captured willy-nilly?"

She colored under his bantering cynicism, and smoked in silence. At least, she would not argue with him. But her mind sped from one supposition to another. He had carried no lights on the motor boat, otherwise she would have seen it before she jumped from the yacht. Yet he must have gone out at that hour of the night expecting the *Kraaken* to be some other boat, keeping some prearranged rendezvous. He

caught her eyes watching him with a curious, dreamy scrutiny.

"Well," he queried, "what is it?"

"I was wondering why you carried no lights last night. And why you are afraid to take me to the mainland."

"You probably have guessed that I am an escaped criminal." He helped himself to the last of the bacon cheerfully. "Perhaps you are right, in a way. I am somewhat of a prisoner here, not my own master at any rate. I cannot come and go as I like."

"I was a prisoner, too." She spoke slowly, looking away from him at the opalescent sea lapping along the coral rocks. "And I, also, have escaped. You have been more generous than I was. I may leave here and go back into the world, and you have told me this much of yourself. You saved me last night, too, and were ready to signal the yacht at the risk of being discovered."

"Don't take me literally," he laughed back at her with the teasing look of cynical evasiveness he had shown the night before. "I am not an escaped prisoner exactly, but I might be a prisoner possibly, if I were to go back. Now, you will imagine the exact crime that I was capable of, won't you?"

She shook her head.

"I don't care, somehow. What right has either one of us to the other's confidence merely because chance has thrown us together? I feel apologetic this morning. And yet, I am glad you saved me. The instant I struck the water I had the wildest desire to live." She looked at him with sudden confidence. "I will tell you who I am."

"It's quite safe. I can assure you we will be comrades here on this bit of earth many days, probably years. We will not be able to betray each other, even if we wanted to. No boats ever land here."

"Then, how did you reach here, and why did you go out to meet a ship last

night? You get your supplies from some coast liner, don't you?"

"Lady of the moon"—he eyed her amusedly—"you leap from a palatial private yacht into the ocean. You are rescued, and plead with me not to notify your friends. You land on my island with diamonds on your fingers, in full evening dress. Yet I could see you plainly as you stood poised ready to jump. You were on that deck alone. You jumped deliberately to escape from —what?"

"Life with a man whom I could not tolerate!" she exclaimed passionately, rising and facing away from him out to sea. "I want every one to think I am dead. It is the only way I can escape. My husband will probably find a new interest in hunting for me, if he imagines I am still alive. And this will give me a chance to live in my own way. I want you to be generous. Take me back to the mainland, and forget that you ever heard of me! I don't care where you land me. I can find my way."

"Do you plan to meet somebody?" he asked.

"You think the only antidote for one poison is another? There has been no other man in my life, not even in my memory. I only want freedom. You think I am quite mad, don't you?"

"No. You have merely a little more nerve and initiative than other women, that is all. There are thousands like you, both men and women who long for what they call freedom. Remember this: 'So free we seem, so fettered fast we are.' It is all the next twirl of Fate's roulette wheel. We have nothing to do with it."

She looked at him with an eager defiance in her eyes, her hands unconsciously clenching at her sides.

"You think so, do you? Well, I don't, and I make my own terms with Fate or whatever it is that makes us prisoners! You think you can keep me

here against my will! Then watch me, because I tell you now that I will leave here the first chance I get!"

CHAPTER IV.

Throughout the first week on the island, Beatrice kept aloof in the everyday routine she discovered her companion maintained. Giving up the use of the hut to her, he had taken up quarters down on the motor boat, moored within the quiet cove. She had deliberately ignored him beyond the merest necessary responses at mealtimes, and had spent her time rambling over the island, or watching for hours at a time at the highest point for some sign of a coasting ship.

Oddly enough, it was the daily inconveniences of her own wardrobe that troubled her most. No amount of ingenuity could repair her evening gown. She compromised by cutting off the torn chiffon, and wearing the satin slip. It was comically incongruous, but better than the pajamas, she decided. And here a sudden thought struck her: What had he wanted with pajamas, anyway, a castaway on a desert isle?

Evidently, he had come here prepared for another mode of living. The comb he brought her and the toilet soap might have come from the best-fitted week-end case. And around the hut she found other proofs of his having belonged recently to the same world as herself, a silver cigarette case, his pig-skin bill book from a Fifth Avenue shop, a pair of first-class field glasses, a volume of Stevenson selections, a recent radio handbook and several volumes of Wells and Conrad. Behind the couch were some New York newspapers not more than three weeks old. She puzzled over all of these without coming any nearer to his secret.

He seemed determined to overlook her presence as far as it was possible. When she emerged from the hut, he was

usually preparing breakfast. The first of the second week, however, he turned to her suddenly as she came leisurely to the table, and asked her why she did not do her share of work.

"This, for instance." He indicated the morning meal. "I could be doing other things if you would get our meals. You should, you know. It is expected of the female to look after this end of the labor. I fail to see why you should act like a favored guest."

"If you will let me have some supplies of my own I shall be very glad to cook for myself, and not trouble you."

"Stuff!" He leaned his elbows on the table, and smiled across at her. "Why can't you drop conventionality and be a good fellow? My name is Clive. What is yours?"

She hesitated, reddening at his friendliness. It was impossible to keep up any appearance of hauteur with a man who frankly ignored it, or worse yet, was amused. Besides, what did it matter whether he knew her first name or not? On second thought, she gave another, her mother's middle name, Beverly. He looked directly into her eyes as she said it, and they wavered and evaded him.

"You don't lie easily, do you?" he said keenly. "Still, it's a good name, good enough. I didn't make mine up. By the way, I have good news for you. Digging around in the lockers on the boat I found some fairly good aéroplane linen. I've got needles and linen thread, too, and shears stowed away there. Some Crusoe, eh? If you want to try your hand at dressmaking, there you are!"

"I'd love to!" She spoke with almost breathless thankfulness. But the thought behind her words was not gratitude to him. She saw in the linen a fairly decent covering in which she could get away from the island.

For several days she worked eagerly

and absorbingly, fashioning a plain, one-piece gown out of the linen. It surprised her to find how awkward she was over the simplest style she could think of, plain as a child's smock. When it was finished, he looked at her approvingly as she came down to the landing where he was tinkering with the engine. It was the first time she had joined him except at mealtime. Since his suggestion, she had assumed the preparation of these, and had even become interested in varying their fare with new dishes from his stock of canned goods.

"Looks like a perfectly feasible and sensible affair to me," he said. "Better make up several. I won't need the stuff."

"Are you going out in the boat?" she asked, taking in his occupation. "I'm not curious. I suppose you do go away somewhere at times to renew supplies. If you wouldn't mind, I should like to get a few things myself. I haven't any money, but my rings are worth several thousand dollars."

"Sorry, but it would arouse suspicion. I don't want any one to know you are here with me. Neither do you; isn't that so? You'd have the *Kraaken* here inside of twenty-four hours. Let some sailor on my ship get wind of any woman being here, and the first port would be full of the gossip."

"What is your ship, the one you came out to meet when the yacht passed?"

He nodded his head calmly.

"It's the mother ship to good and honest shipwrecked men. I can get you anything you like in the way of provisions, however. Suppose we ask for a couple of goats and some chickens. The landscape calls for both."

"When are you going? - To-night?"

"Yes. I'm getting low on oil. Will you be afraid to stay here alone?"

"I'd rather go with you," she said with sudden boldness. "I could stay hidden in the cabin."

He laughed up at her aggravatingly.

"No, you don't, Beverly, or whatever your name is! I can't take the chance of having you bob up serenely and ask to be taken aboard and dropped off at New Orleans."

"You probably can't understand that it is very monotonous for me here," she said curtly. "You never go out in the boat for amusement, or even fishing."

"I can't take the risk of daylight trips, otherwise I should be delighted to go jaunting with you. And you'd better put these rings back where they belong." He pushed them toward her from the spot on the planking where she had placed them. "They might slip off."

She picked them up carelessly.

"I don't suppose you came across my necklace when you were on the boat? I had one on that night, and I can't find it. Diamonds set in platinum, pendant style. Perhaps I lost it in the water."

She spoke of it as lightly as if it had been a string of berries she had worn for ornament. He stared up at her curiously, resting a moment from his work. His skin was deeply tanned. In contrast, the blue of his eyes showed vividly, and his blond hair seemed fairer.

"You don't care for jewels, do you? No, I haven't found your necklace. If I had, I would have given it to you. I might even have surmised that it belonged to you alone, since the mermaids of this group of keys do not depart from their customary pearls. By the way, do you know you're looking very much perkier? Exposure does you good. You'll be as husky as a Seminole squaw in a year."

She flushed at his laugh. It seemed as if he delighted in teasing her about the duration of her stay. At the same time she was looking at the signet ring on his right hand. It was a bloodstone, cut deeply. Catching her thought, he answered it.

"F. C. W. Does that help? I am called by my second name, Clive. The

rest remains a dark secret. I'm going to put this back." He held up the recharged battery he had been filling, and swung over into the cockpit of the boat. She lingered, not waiting for him to join her, but noticing the mechanism of the steering gear and engine. It seemed the same as Rex's motor boat that she had often run herself in the bay at Graystone, where they had summered before her marriage.

It occurred to her that she had the advantage of her jailer here. She held the key to escape in her own hands, if she had the nerve to try it. He was not aware that she could run the boat alone. The idea persisted and fascinated her. She wondered why it had not come to her before. The mainland lay inevitably to the northwest. It was merely a question of courage, of securing food for herself from the stock of provisions he kept on hand, and water from the spring which he had showed her trickling from the rocks on the western side of the island. She would keep Clive in ignorance of her intent and slip away the day after he made his trip out to sea for supplies. He would be tired, then, and would sleep in his favorite spot, under the group of palmettos.

Thereafter, her manner changed toward him. She relaxed and was almost comradely. A new expression in her eyes puzzled him. They held expectancy, restlessness, and intent brooding when she gazed toward the sea.

Once she asked him casually how far they were from Key West. Midway, he had told her. She remembered he had spoken once of New Orleans as the next port of call for his own "mother ship." She did not want to reach any place where she might be recognized. If it were possible for her to cross to the mainland, she could make her way to the railroad, she felt certain.

The need of immediate cash bothered

her, but her rings could be pawned if she could find her way to a town. If she offered them as security to people along the shore, it would arouse suspicion. She taxed her imagination, conjuring up some plausible tale of losing her course in the motor boat.

And here she encountered another obstacle. In taking the motor boat, she was deliberately depriving Clive of his sole chance to secure his own supplies or to leave the island. She smiled scornfully to herself at her own flash of pity for him. He was known to be here. He had friends who kept him supplied with food and oil. When he failed to meet them they would send to the island to find out the reason why. It was perfectly simple. Her escape would not place him in jeopardy.

"Do you mind if I go aboard the boat to search for my necklace?" she asked him one morning. "It may have slipped off after you took me from the water."

He assented willingly enough. This gave her the opportunity she had wanted of familiarizing herself with the engine and steering gear. It was the same as Rex's. She knew she would have no trouble in running it. She planned to leave the morning after Clive went out to get his supplies. This was playing on the level with him. He would have a fresh lot of food in, enough to last him a couple of weeks or more.

As the time drew near, she felt a keen exhilaration, not only at the chance of effecting her escape, but at outwitting him, too. He had laughed at her when she asked him to take her to the mainland, had given her to understand that her welfare was secondary to his own, that he had no intention of changing his plans merely for her convenience. She felt justified in beating him at his own game of self-preservation.

After he had left the island around midnight, she went up to the lookout rock, and watched the lights of a steamer slip through the darkness. It

did not pass anywhere near nor did it appear to stop. She waited over an hour, but no sign of the motor boat appeared. But just before dawn, when a shadow of pale gold quivered along the eastern horizon, she discerned, in the lifting sea mist, the distant outlines of a cruiser yacht, so like the *Kraaken* that her heart seemed to stop beating. It was passing southward, bound toward the Gulf.

As she stood erect, staring after it, Clive hailed her from the northern point of the cove. He had come about in an arc, following the incoming tide, and he met her with a new look of interest in his eyes as she came down to the hut.

"Fine of you to stay up," he said, tossing some small sacks in a corner. "Nothing to reward your ladyship with this time, except the New York papers." He laid a bundle on the table. "You have achieved headlines."

She opened them in silence, and stared at the two-inch heading across the front page of the first.

Mystery of the Sea.

Beautiful Wife of Millionaire Lost off Florida Coast.

Randall Sears Spends Fortune in Fruitless Search for Body.

Clive's eyes mocked her with their amused enjoyment of her interest.

"Late lamented, delighted at her own demise, eh?"

A shiver passed over her whole body. It was as if those seeking fingers of light had flashed upon her hiding place.

CHAPTER V.

As she had expected, after he had unloaded the supplies Clive flung himself down on mats and pillows under the clump of palmettos and slept. The hut stood between the trees and the path to the landing place. She waited until his deep, even breathing reassured her. There was little to carry down to the boat; her supply of fresh water,

the raincoat he had given her, and the food she had prepared for herself, which could be eaten easily as she steered.

In collecting the things she meant to take with her, the thought of the lost diamond necklace came to her again. She might need the money it would bring, and yet there was the danger that she would be traced in trying to dispose of it. Besides, she did not want to feel herself indebted to Randy any more than was necessary, in this new life that lay waiting for her.

She had figured out her best mode of exit. There must be no apparent intent, nothing to startle Clive if he happened to wake before she reached the boat. Leisurely she sauntered down the path to the landing, lingered, as was her custom, to gaze at the varying hues of the sunrise out to sea. Even when she stepped into the boat, she did not hurry, but turned to look back at the outstretched figure under the palmettos. And in her thoughts was an unspoken challenge to him. A year would turn her into a Seminole squaw, he had said. She smiled with closed lips, and started the motor.

At the first vibrant throbbing on the still, warm air, Clive started to his feet, half awake. Below him, he saw the amazing picture of the motor boat moving out of the cove, headed directly for the narrow channel to the sea. The full knowledge of her intent came to him, and he shouted to her, running full speed down the path to the shore.

Beatrice, glancing back, saw that he had taken the short cut. He would be at the point of rock outside the channel to head her off before she could take the boat through. Deliberately she turned the course northward, taking the risk of the hidden reef Clive had told her lay there. At that moment he took the dive on the run, struck the water like a young manatee, and made for her in long, overhauling reaches.

Again he was calling something to her. His voice sounded guttural and choked. She put on full speed deliberately, heading now into the rounding, rocky channel he had seemed to pass so easily. And suddenly there came a ripping, grinding sound. The boat careened like a knifed animal, drove forward a few yards and stuck, jammed on the ragged edge of the reef.

"You fool, you damned little fool!" He pulled himself into the cockpit and ripped the wheel away from her gripping fingers.

She stood aside, the hot, angry tears forcing themselves from her eyes, a dull, bitter rage at him seething through her, too deep for words. She watched him as he tried to force the boat from the reef with its own power, to back it off, to save it from the wrenching surge of the incoming tide. His face was a mask of steel self-control when he finally spoke to her.

"The current is dangerous here at this time. We will swim with it instead of trying to make the point. I will come with you."

When they had reached the beach, he left her and returned to the boat, taking the path up over the rocks to the point. From here she watched him start above where the boat lay and swim to it with the current.

A fierce resentment and rage against him filled her throbbing head as she went up the beach to the hut. There was no relief from tears. She hated him! Over and over she said the words until she felt she could have taken his revolver from the shelf where it lay, and shot him when he returned.

She had expected anger from him, reproaches, his own peculiar kind of reprisal, rasping her nerves with his cynical reflections on her lack of honor in deserting him.

Instead, he was absolutely mute when he came back several hours later. Not once did he speak to her. She saw that

he had floated the boat off the reef, and beached it above tide line on the point. She prepared the midday meal as usual and waited for him to come to the board table he had put up near the hut. Instead, he took some provisions and returned to the boat.

Evidently, his policy would be one of nonresistance. He would not upbraid her for what she had done. He would merely boycott her. She could smile now, as the nerve tension relaxed. There was something boyish in this show of sending her to Coventry. She told herself it was a distinct relief to be free of even the slight companionship mealtime had established between them.

For over a week he worked on the repairing of the motor-boat hull, and during this time no word passed between them. Beatrice, coming to regard his manner as childish, grew restive at the utter loneliness of the days without some one to speak to. After all, she argued to herself, he had been right. She had been unaware of the hidden reef in the channel. He had tried to warn her, to save her from wrecking the boat, and she had deliberately, heedlessly, gone on. He had saved her, too. If he had not wakened and come after her, she might have been caught on the reef; might have been in danger of losing her life when the tide came in at the flood and beat the boat from the reef.

The ethics of the affair gradually appealed to her sense of strict justice. After all, he had risked his life to save her from the sea the night she had jumped from the yacht. Yet she had planned to steal his boat and leave him on the island alone. It was against a man's code of a square deal, a violation of the unwritten law of fair play. For the first few days she had been furious with him for his interference, and unforgiving, but by the second week, she felt herself thrilled at this, her first encounter with a dominant, male nature.

Rex, her brother, had been unstable, a drifter into the easiest solution always. Randy had been the product of a system which permitted sons of wealth to become idlers, fungi existing as a visible excrescence of decay. The phrasing amused her.

But this man was different. He was a lawbreaker of some type, but individual in his protected isolation. A hermit, but not a castaway, keeping up invisible connection with the world through his mysterious visitor, the "mother ship," he had called it. Was it for his own benefit or that of others, she wondered, that he remained on this lonely key?

At any rate, there was a bond between them that even his scorn of her and his silence could not ignore. She was there, the unwelcome sharer of his lot and secret. And gradually, there stole over her a peculiar, unexpressed, unrealized contentment in this common tie, the mutual dependence on each other's honor and good-fellowship. It was this that she had broken when she should have been the first to keep to the code of her kind.

As regret and self-accusation swept over her, there came, also, a revelation. It had been she herself who had been suspicious during those first days on the island. All the old, worn-out, inherited fears and inhibitions had worried her. She was alone on an island with a strange man. According to all accepted tradition, she was in danger. Her thoughts had been filled with dread of him, and, as a matter of fact, he had treated her frankly as a comrade in extremity, without the slightest suggestion of any intent to take advantage of the situation. His calmness was reassuring, but not complimentary to her pride or vanity.

She found the answer unexpectedly one day when she was clearing out some shelves in a corner of the hut. Hidden between the pages of a volume of Jap-

anese poetry, she found an unmounted snapshot of a girl. On the title page of the book, scrawled obliquely in a large, unshaded handwriting, was this inscription:

"To Clive from Val," and underneath, "The rest is silence."

She studied the girl's features and pose. She was leaning against a tree trunk, hands behind her head, chin uplifted. An oval face, the mouth a trifle thin-lipped, decisive, selfish, but well-shaped, hair in a bobbed aureole of sun-touched fluffiness, eyes rather long, with a slight lift of the outer corners. She wore a sports suit with short cape, hung loosely from her shoulders, and no hat. Beatrice turned back to the poem where she had found the photograph, and read with interest:

Two chambers has the heart of man;
Joy lives in one,
In the other Pain.

When Joy awakes in one
Then, in the other, Pain
Steals off to sleep.

When Joy awakes, rejoice, rejoice!
But not too loud,
Lest Pain awake.

When Pain besets you, let it mourn;
Joy is not dead, it only sleeps,
'Twill wake again.

HAKURO, Empress of Japan.

The first tears she had shed since the night she had landed on the island, welled slowly from her eyes and fell on her linen gown. Some tension seemed to break or loosen within her at this discovery of his intimate understanding with another woman. It lessened the sympathy between them that she had half hoped might grow out of their enforced companionship. She replaced the photograph in the book, and hid it where she had found it.

During the night she was awakened by the pounding of the surf and the roar of the wind and rain. A fitful, equinoctial storm had broken over the

island. When she looked outside the door, nothing but a blinding, slanting drive of rain met her eyes. It seemed to meet the waves and lift them like a whirlwind at sea.

She found the raincoat and slipped it on, her first thought of Clive asleep on the boat. A demand surged through her to share his danger. What if he were to be swept out to sea? She lighted the swinging lamp so that he would see the light and know she was awake and safe. Swinging back the door, she shouted his name, over and over again, out into the night, as she stood outside the hut. And without warning, she found him stumbling forward up the path, catching her in his arms and pulling her back into the shelter of the hut. The light went out with the gust of wind.

"I was afraid——" she began, putting her hand out to touch him. "Isn't it horrible? Devils let loose. Will the hut stand?"

"Possibly." His tone was abstracted. She felt his arm around her shoulders, his fingers entangled in her unbound hair. Neither spoke. The air was charged with the electric vibrations of the tempest. Something of its resistless current seemed to flow into their being. In Beatrice, there was triumph at his surrender. She felt it in every quivering, answering nerve. He had fought with himself, and had lost.

What could it matter, she asked herself resentfully, if they two dared to seize the magic of the hour, when death might claim them any day? Life had stretched out empty hands to her so far. Wealth and utter disillusion. Randy believed her dead. She yielded, as he held her closer to him, quiescent, responsive to the pressure of his lips seeking hers.

How long they stood there, she could not have told. There was the starvation of months in his kisses, yet the aloof, selective quality in her mind compared them with Randy's, abandoned, repel-

ling. Holding her strongly, there was still a protective tenderness in the infolding safety of his arms, a lingering, seeking yearning in his kisses that thrilled and quieted her. The storm passed swiftly over the island. The wind died away outside. With the glow of the moon, revealed above the swirling, vanishing clouds, he released her, almost pushing her away.

"It's not real," he laughed. "Don't fool yourself. It's nature's damned joke on us. That and the storm. I know you hate me, and there's a woman I love."

She stood where he left her, eyes closed, hands pressed against her breast, smiling.

CHAPTER VI.

He came to breakfast for the first time since she had tried to escape in the motor boat. His manner was as it had been on her arrival, cool, amused, courteous. If he noticed her heightened color, and the evasion in her eyes, he took no advantage of her mood. On the contrary, as he lighted a cigarette over his third cup of coffee, he leaned his arms on the table, and made a straight proposition to her.

"You want to get away from this place. You have proved you were capable of taking your own initiative in the matter, and bolting. Supposing, now, I offer to help you?"

"I will gladly go at any time." She crumpled a scrap of cracker and tossed it to an adventurous young gull that lighted near them. "Would you suggest the pajamas or the linen smock as a suitable landing costume for me, and please, will you lend your raincoat as a cloak of charity?"

Her gaze held quite as mocking humor as his own. The unexpected retort passed over his defense, and left him without a comeback.

"I'm glad you see it as I do, I mean the situation here—after last night.

You were right. Throw a man and woman together under these conditions and, sooner or later, they will be in each other's arms. Propinquity. Back to nature. I am convinced and enlightened on a side of myself I had not thought-rampant. I acted just like any other male."

"Did you?" Her smile was an enigma.

"And you are another man's wife. I've always kept faith with myself on certain things. That was one of them. And I am going to marry a girl up North whom I thoroughly love and admire."

Her smile persisted. There was a trifle too much emphasis in his tone, as if he were bringing out extenuating evidence in his own favor.

"One of the reasons why I shall help you is to let her know I am alive. I shall expect you to do this. I cannot communicate with her."

"By way of the mother ship?"

"That merely brings me supplies and newspapers, no mail. In fact, no one aboard knows who I am. I am supposed to be a rather eccentric scientist, studying the submarine flora of the keys. Once such a man lived here. I happened to find this place as I was cruising south some years ago, landed here, and talked with him. I saw him afterward, four times in all. He left over two years ago, and went back to Washington—belongs to the Institute now. Fine old chap."

"And he knows you are living here now?"

"He does not. Nobody knows. If they did, the thing wouldn't work right. Listen. I shall have to tell you a part of the story, and trust to your sense of honor and squareness to keep still about it. I have committed no crime myself. But a man who is very near to me, whose good name before the world is of more value than my own, would be

ruined and discredited if I were produced as a witness against him.

"I am not of any special good to the world at large. He is. His personality is like the keystone in a certain department of public service. There is a conspiracy to break him, to put him out of public life, discrediting him forever. He knew one single moment of weakness, through a woman, I may say. Certain interests employ women just as the wise old political strategists used to. She gave him away. Just as you may give me away."

He half turned his head from her, watching the sea, deeply blue and placid this morning after the storm.

"We'll have to take that chance, of course." Her tone was cool and direct. "What do you want me to do?"

"I will take you to the mainland. You have no money. I have plenty here. If it troubles your vanity or pride to take it from me, we will call it a loan. You will have to be a good actress, and submit to disguise along the coast here. Even the natives, or rather, especially the natives, are curious about strangers. A young woman landing from a motor boat, dressed as you are, might be subject to suspicion. You can tell a plausible story of drifting out of your way in the motor boat. You can say you came up from one of the house boats around the lower keys, lost your way, and do not care to attempt the trip back. Then, inquire the way to the nearest railroad station. I think this is your best way out. Buy a ticket south, change at the first place where you can buy other clothes——"

"I suppose you realize I haven't a hat to my name."

"I have a pongee outing hat that would be becoming to you." He looked her over critically. "With that dress, you'd get by all right." He went on with his instructions: "After you've bought proper clothes, go to Washington."

She frowned, startled and puzzled.

"I couldn't go there. I was brought up at my aunt's home, the old Desart place. People might know me."

"You are less liable to be recognized in a big city than in a small place," he reminded her. "Had you fixed any special point ahead of you to aim at?"

"I want to go to Honolulu and the southern islands. I lived there with my father when I was a little girl."

"You are really very feminine, aren't you?" He smiled at her with the first show of friendliness in days. "You have been hurt by the grown-up world, and you turn for healing to the place where you found happiness as a child. Well, I shall not detain you more than a day in Washington. I want you to see my closest friend, Doctor Esteban. It will not excite suspicion. He is the old scientist who used to live here. You will tell him about me, that I am alive and well. Do not tell how you met me, or of your staying here. Ask him to arrange an interview for you with Merevale Lomar. Do you think it possible for two women to meet and keep to the rules of the game?"

She met his gaze steadily, resenting his bantering tone, and cynical inference.

"You mean that she will want to know exactly how I got the message from you, and where you are?"

"Yes. She's an insistent, imperious type, and she's used to having her own way—went in for official bureaucracy during the war. She'd pin you down to cases. She might even want to have you arrested as a suspicious character."

"Don't you think you overrate your own importance? Why are you letting her know at all? She might be relieved of a responsibility if she believed you were dead!"

"That appears to be your pet complex just now, people who evade unpleasantness by—well, beating it, so to speak."

"You have, haven't you? So have I!"

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Only there is this difference between us. I am going farther on, as far away as I can get from the environment I hate. You are already fretting and whittling at your bars, wanting to get back. The reason is, of course, that you have some one waiting for you. I am on my own." She smiled back at him, her eyes as inscrutable as his own. "When do we start?"

"At daybreak. That will give us time to reach the mainland in good season for you." He rose and went into the hut. A moment later he returned with a large pigskin brief case. She had noticed it before among a lot of books and papers in a corner. He unstrapped it, snapped the catch, and opened up its pockets. The first held bills of one-thousand-dollar denomination, the second hundreds, the last broken lots of tens, fives, fifties—fifty thousand dollars at least, she thought.

She looked up at him with startled questioning.

"Don't worry!" he laughed. "It is all mine, and legally. I am not a counterfeiter. You must take all you will need."

"I'm not in the habit of being paid for my services! Unless you agree to take my rings as security, I won't take any."

"We haggle as if we could help ourselves. My dear girl, don't you see that we are bound together by the law of mutual stress and necessity? We are held fast by the old bond of self-preservation through the confessions we have made. You may betray me at the first police station you come to. I assure you the government will reward you. I can notify the nearest consulate that you are alive, and the *Kraaken* will be after you as fast as the wireless can make it."

She stripped her rings from her fingers and put them on the bare table. One was her engagement ring from Randy, a huge diamond incrusted about

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with smaller ones set in platinum, a blatant, gaudy announcement of her complaisancy, she had always felt. Another was a ruby and diamond, set deeply in gypsy style. She retained the third—a peculiar black intaglio, set about with pearls.

"I prefer the one you kept," he said, his eyes keen with interest. "Has it associations?"

"It was my father's." Her tone was cool and without resentment. "I would not part with it. The large one is worth several thousand dollars. Take that. I assure you it has no tender associations. I would throw it to any one who yearned for it."

"I'd rather have one that you would be anxious to redeem. Then I would hear from you again."

She met his eyes with no answering fire.

"You are amazingly supplied with self-esteem. You are engaged to be married, and you are afraid to have me here any longer because you have discovered an unsuspected weakness in yourself, a yielding to propinquity and the occasion, I think you called it. Yet you wish to feel quite positive you have made a lasting impression, something that shall be a sort of secret shrine in my consciousness forever. I am no candle burner, I'm afraid. And I do not feed myself on the solacing excuses that you find."

"What do you mean?" The color rose darkly to his tanned face. "I suppose you know you're making me out a damned fool."

"That is your own sense of the ridiculous, not mine." She did not explain further. He would not have understood her unless she had told the simple truth, that she did not believe, as he did, that the mutual attraction which they had for each other was merely the result of enforced propinquity. It was repellent, horrible to her. Did he think that she would have responded to

the embraces of any man as she had to his? A man of finer sensibilities, she told herself bitterly, would have distinguished between a yielding to the passion of a moment, and the keen rapture of the storm's dénouement.

But again, the thought flashed on her, if he had considered her the average woman, would he have left her, and plunged out into the night to save her from the temptation of the moment? She smiled to herself. Had it been to save her or himself? She knew he had a curious, dominant strain of immolation in him. His deliberate sacrifice of himself in isolating himself on this lonely key to save the honor of some other man proved that to her. He would be quite capable of playing the rôle of cenobite, regarding her as temptation incarnate. He had all of the mental equipment, despite his modern outlook, of *Athanael* experiencing an exquisite thrill in denying himself *Thais*.

She remembered a story of Tolstoy's that had held her interest; a hermit had killed the woman who sought the shelter of his hut from a storm, and unwittingly tempted him beyond endurance by her beauty. Clive thought their reaching out to each other had been due to the contagion of the elements, their tumult and abandon, nothing more. She hated him as she had the day he had taken her from the motor boat on the reef. He was the first man who had ever roused her, who had combated her will, the first who had ever thrilled her by the mere nearness of his presence.

Would she ever see him again, she wondered, as she completed her meager preparations for leaving the island? The sole link between them was their sharing of the danger of betrayal, their mutual dependence upon the other's silence and honor.

The following morning she wakened just before daybreak, and dressed. He was already up and down on the boat.

She saw the flash of a light moving about, and went alone to the point of rock where she had sat so many hours like one marooned, watching the unanswering sea. A dread of leaving it swept over her. It had been a place of sanctuary, a spot where she had found forgetfulness and mental health.

She came slowly down the narrow path worn by their feet to the group of palmettos. And here again she paused. He had slept here as usual on a couple of fiber mats. The grass was crushed where his head had lain. And suddenly she knelt down in the breaking dawn light, and pulled away a handful of the green blades, slipping them into the front of her linen dress.

When they reached the mainland late that afternoon, he helped her ashore, and showed her the shore road.

"Does it occur to you that I do not even know your name?" she asked. "What is your exact message to Miss Lomar?"

"Tell her Clive is alive, that is all." He held her hand in a close clasp. "I wonder if we shall ever see each other again? I wish you——"

"Wish me nothing but freedom." She waved her hand as she took the road in the direction he had indicated.

CHAPTER VII.

Her first compact with herself was to rid her conscience of her promise. She would put aside her own convenience, her own safety, even, to keep faith with him after he had trusted her.

It had been an easy thing to reach the railroad station from the point where he had left her. She had walked until she met a negro woman driving a mule cart to town, and had easily bargained with her for a ride. Adopting Clive's suggestion, she had told a plausible story of the motor-boat trip up from Miami, of running into the storm,

and drifting a while until the steering gear could be righted. She had been afraid to attempt the return trip, she had said, and wanted to reach the railroad. Her mode of dress had been her best protection. It effectually separated her in the train from even the well-gowned women travelers, and she had avoided the stations near fashionable resorts, not leaving the train until they were well into Georgia.

Here she had stopped overnight at a small town, making purchases of the clothes she needed. They were in sharp contrast to those she had ordered lavishly as Randy Sears' wife. Already she was adapting herself to the character she had selected as her best rôle. She would pose as a young widow seeking employment in the North. She stayed overnight at the small local hotel, had her meals served in her room, and tried to establish in her own mind that she was no longer Beatrice Sears. She was Mrs. Beverly. It was the name she had told Clive. Assuming it now, there lurked a half hope in her mind that it might prove the means of his tracing her, if he cared to.

She had taken three hundred dollars of his proffered money, and he had insisted on her keeping the rings. If she had a troubled conscience, he told her, she might send the money some time to Doctor Esteban with instructions to hold it for him.

When she had undressed that night, the blades of crushed grass had fallen from her breast. She gathered them together carefully, and slipped them into a small suède hand bag she had purchased. Laying it away, she found herself annoyed and dissatisfied. She had put out the light, and lain down on the single bed close to the open, screened window.

The fragrance of a garden stole up to her, jasmine and roses, and a curious mingling of all the delicate, lesser flowers. The blossoming sprays of some

clambering plant leaned against the screen. Deep, rose-pink flowers with ruby hearts and fuchsia-shaded tips. She did not know their names. They pressed close to the screen like palpitant, beautiful night moths. She stirred restlessly, and longed with all her being for the island and the nearness to Clive. When she finally slept, it was with the blades of half-dried grass folded between her palms under her cheek.

On her arrival in Washington she had gratified her curiosity before leaving the station. There was no telephone listed under the name of Merevale Lomar. Doctor Esteban's address verified the one given her by Clive. It was in an unfamiliar section of the city, the old residential, *ante-bellum* part which lay out along the Eastern Branch. Taking a taxi, she rode far out beyond what seemed the city limits, past old, neglected mansions with decrepit porticoes and dangling shutters mercifully overgrown with vines.

Furtive views of the river here between the trees looked extremely Southern, the wild rice bending in the wind, the shores fringed with overhanging, huge-boled willows. Half-buried gateposts reared protesting, crumbling stumps at every overgrown driveway. The air was still and hazy with morning sunlight. It thrilled her to think that Clive must have driven over the same road often, and turned in at this vine-covered archway to visit Doctor Esteban. She lowered her veil as they approached the house. She would keep to her new rôle. Apparently, she was the most subdued, aloof young widow, with no interest in her visit's mission, except to fulfill an errand of her late husband's friend.

Doctor Esteban was not at home, the young, light-colored maid told her at the wide-open, double-entrance doors,

"You'd better see Mis' Estelle," she suggested confidentially. "She wouldn't

let you see him even if he was here, till you told her what it is you want."

From the brilliant sunshine out of doors, Beatrice passed through a long hallway lined with high bookcases filled with specimens of oceanography, sea flora, shells, mounted fishes, oddly lifelike in the half light. The tone of the place was pitched in a minor key, all shades half drawn, no hangings or cushioned recesses visible. The interior was almost Italian in its simplicity and beauty of arrangement and line.

In a large room overlooking the river she found Estelle Esteban, a slender, alert woman in the fifties, bound to her high-backed wheel chair, a prisoner through neuritis. She extended a small, heavily veined hand, scrutinizing her visitor with keen, birdlike eyes.

"Sit there near me. I cannot rise to receive you. I am a slave to my nerves —rode them high for years and they have captured me now. What is your name? Elvina did not get it."

"Beverly, Mrs. Beverly. I am a widow."

"You won't be long! Doctor Esteban is attending a conference in New York. Why do you wish to see him?"

Her directness was disarming, but before Beatrice could frame a reply some one stepped through the long French window from the vine-screened veranda.

"Go away, Carleton!" said Mrs. Esteban sharply. "I cannot talk business now. Mrs. Beverly, my cousin, Carleton Sloane."

Beatrice glanced up without interest, met the eyes of the man who was watching her intently, and smiled with a baffling air of aloofness. She knew his thoughts. He was trying to remember where he had seen her before.

"It is wonderful to be here," she said with easy grace. "I have lived so long abroad it is good to be among my own people once more."

Sloane deliberately drew a chair near

hers. It was three years since she had seen him at a dinner shortly after her marriage. They had been introduced casually, had been seated at opposite ends of the long table; and yet his eyes had sought hers continually throughout the meal. She had not talked with him, she remembered that. He could not recall her voice. It was merely a resemblance that haunted him.

Between his cousin's criticisms of Washington, he managed to insert little personal queries that Beatrice knew were aimed to trap her. He learned that she was a widow, that she had been living, for a short time in Paris, had drifted with a few friends to South America where Mr. Beverly had died suddenly.

"And he was a friend of Doctor Esteban's?"

"Hardly that, I am afraid," Beatrice replied quietly. "He had heard of him and his wonderful services to science."

"And you wish to see my husband through this common bond between them?" Her hostess' brilliant, dark eyes seemed to glow at her from her thin, sallow face. "How interested he will be! Where are you stopping, Mrs. Beverly?"

"I came directly here from the station. I am only passing through on my way West." Again she caught Sloane's eyes watching her expression. There was intense interest in his face. "I had hoped to meet Doctor Esteban for a few moments, that is all."

"And you stopped over expressly to meet him? Then I shall insist that you remain here for a day or two as my guest. Carleton, keep away while Mrs. Beverly is here. She will want to be very quiet. Carleton is a disturbing element." She turned to Beatrice with a sudden, elfish enjoyment in irritating him. "He is a man of affairs, and is always bothering me to sign away everything I own. He is the wicked family

friend who tells you enticing stories of eight-and-one-half-per-cent stock, and you give him all the cash you possess, and he brings you back beautiful certificates that never turn back into cash."

"Estelle, you are in pain to-day, aren't you, sweet cousin?" Carleton smiled back at her with serene good humor. "Mrs. Beverly will be glad to see me. It is lonesome out here. I shall come every day while she is here."

"Not every day!" flashed back Mrs. Esteban. "Not until Merevale is over her crucial hour. What time is the wedding, Carleton? I should enjoy being there. It celebrates a custom that will shortly become extinct, I believe. Marriage for cash, my dear, so much for so much in cold blood. One of our most brilliant girls making an idiot of herself because she happened to catch the Continental idea from being born in Paris."

When Beatrice caught the name which Clive had given her, the full significance of this woman's careless gossip flashed on her. The girl he had told her he loved and expected to marry, was deliberately marrying some one else while he was an exile on the lonely key. She leaned forward slightly, fixing her attention on the glimpse of the garden from the long windows, apparently uninterested.

"You're all wrong there, Estelle." Sloane slipped further down in the deep, willow armchair, and lighted a fresh cigarette. "She's absolutely satisfied with him. She's got a superman, not a poor dub like Clive or a wolfish promoter like myself. She is marrying a diplomat, a man who will utilize her administrative ability to the highest advantage."

"But she loved Clive Welling!" A malicious gleam of deliberate relish shone in Mrs. Esteban's large, restless eyes as she regarded her cousin. "If he had not died she would have married him in the face of the world, the

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flesh, and the devil, and told them all to go to——”

“You'll shock Mrs. Beverly, Estelle.” Sloane's lazy lashes lifted in the direction of the silent figure next to him. “If you are going to remain here, can't I be of service, get your trunks, do anything to make you happy?”

Beatrice ignored the underlying intent of the last. She smiled back at him without a trace of emotion on her face.

“Thanks. It's ever so good of you both, but I am very tired from the long trip up from Argentina. I think I had better go to a quiet hotel and rest until Doctor Esteban's return.”

“But you will let me see you there?” He rose and stood beside her as she took her leave. Mrs. Esteban looked from one to the other with the curious prescience of those whose bodies are inert, and their brains unleashed to suggestion.

“You are going to annoy Mrs. Beverly, Carleton,” she said. “I feel I should warn her against you. He is a wolf in thoroughbred attire. He is absolutely ruthless when he wants anything. He has no moral code, no favorite god or devil. His motto is the same as *Peer Gynt's*, 'Troll, to thyself be enough!' Doctor Esteban tolerates him and despises him. I like him because my infirmities make me revolt against everything, and Carleton is the personification of my own bitterness and spleen. He accomplishes disaster where I can only curse impotently. A delightful team, my dear! We will amuse you. I don't blame you for running away. Call up and tell me where you are located, and I'll send the doctor to you when he gets back. Go with her to her car, Carleton, and make an appointment.”

Her close-lipped smile of cynical enjoyment followed them out. Beatrice felt a longing to be away from the house, from the atmosphere of helpless

revolt and concentrated spleen at life in general. Again, in passing through the hall, she had the impression of being in the subdued half light under the sea. A stuffed, green moray seemed to sway out at her from a case as she brushed against it, a moonfish leered at her from a corner. She breathed in deep relief as they emerged into the oblong of sunlight at the open doorway.

“Dank and clammy, eh?” Carleton smiled at her understandingly. “May I ride a little way with you? I'm bound for the city, too.”

She hesitated, but he was already helping her into the waiting car with assurance, and he stepped after her without waiting for her consent.

“Have a cigarette?” He offered his case easily. “Estelle is a poor, tortured, earthbound soul, taking out its grudge in worrying the fortunate ones. Don't let her rattle you a particle. If you haven't selected a place to stay until Esteban returns, let me suggest the Ridgebrook Inn. You won't want to be in the city. It's too hot. This is very convenient, very comfortable, quiet, select, and all that. And I may see you as much as I hope to.”

A thousand conflicting thoughts raced through her mind as she took the proffered cigarette. When she had heard the news about the coming marriage of Merevale Lomar she had felt the old thrill of recklessness, of some hidden, latent force within herself that swept aside all of her inhibitions, all of her accumulated safety brakes, and left her free to follow her own desires. It was a challenge to the laws of chance and circumstance to permit her acquaintance with this man to go further, yet, for the moment, it was part of the danger she had courted in coming to Washington, and increased the thrill of the game. She lighted her cigarette from his match, and smiled up at him.

“You are very kind,” she said. “I will go there.”

CHAPTER VIII.

The desire to see Merevale Lomar grew more imperative after Beatrice had established herself at the Ridgebrook Inn. She would have to remain several days until Doctor Esteban's return. The wedding, she understood from Carleton Sloane, was to take place at noon the following Monday, four days away.

Four days, she told herself, to make up her own mind on the course she would take regarding Clive's message to the girl. Believing him dead, she had agreed to marry another man. One well worth her while, Carleton had assured her as they chatted together during the ride back to the station to secure her trunk.

"David Gower, extremely wealthy. Owns newspapers all over spots the British flag decorates. Controls certain factions in politics, oil concessions. Miss Lomar met him, oddly enough, through this fellow whom she was to have married, Clive Welling. Welling's father is Rollin Welling, the banker."

Rollin Welling! Beatrice had used the name as bait to her memories, trying to seize on where she had last heard it. Rex was always mixing into concessions, starting things he never could finish, borrowing money on options that promised millions and never materialized.

It was probably only a vagrant memory of a name that had caught her interest and registered. Clive had never told her his last name, but he must have known she would learn it from the Estebans. Why, she wondered, had he sent her to them when it would have been as easy for her to find Merevale Lomar? Had he deliberately set a trap for her, to make certain she delivered his message? Again, the thought struck her, why had he not told her to ask Doctor Esteban himself to send the message that he was alive to the girl in-

stead of trying to bring her and Merevale together?

Or did he imagine for one instant that she was in love with him, after that scene in the hut during the tempest, and had taken this method of disillusioning her? The suspicion roused her pride. She thought of the best way to reach the girl. Not by letter. He had asked her to tell her personally so there would be no tangible evidence of what had passed between them.

Yet, supposing she kept her promise, what would the news of his being alive precipitate? If Merevale loved him, she would break her engagement at the last moment, throw everything into the discard except her belief in Clive. She would demand to know more, where he was, how Beatrice had seen him! Would the knowledge of those weeks when they were together on the island make any difference to her? Would she believe that it was possible for two people, a man and a woman of to-day, to live under those conditions and still steer clear of romance?

And, after all, Beatrice asked herself, had they? If the two obstacles had not come between, what then? She, with the knowledge that she was still a wife; Clive, with this girl's face before him. If they had found themselves under the same circumstances, but free, would they have ignored convention?

Her own sense of humor came to her rescue. The truth was, she felt, that Clive had never really felt any overwhelming love for her. There had been the temptation of the hour, the peculiar, magnetic reaction from the storm, that was all. Any man, she told herself, thrown into the same situation, would have acted as he did. She determined to play fairly with him. She would see Merevale Lomar personally. Doctor Esteban would return any day before the wedding. There would be time if she waited for him, as Clive had directed her. She permitted herself this leeway

of action, crushing back the thought that she was deliberately seeking a way to outwit her conscience. She would wait for Doctor Esteban's return, and then notify Merevale that Clive was alive.

Meanwhile, Carleton Sloane was doing everything in his power to make life interesting for her. She had found the Inn a very quiet, secluded place off the beaten track on the Virginia side of the Potomac. Every morning he waited for her with a couple of riding horses for a gallop together, a chance to ride slowly side by side, to talk intimately, to gain her confidence.

She found him amazingly interesting. It was satisfying, too, even while she would not have acknowledged it, to find a man like this paying her all the little attentions of a sophisticated infatuation after Clive's cool, impersonal comradeship. But she held him at a safe distance, assuming the reticence of her supposed widowhood, and taking advantage of the aloofness it afforded her.

Her eagerness and anxiety to ascertain when Doctor Esteban would return annoyed him.

"You know perfectly well that you are not leaving as soon as you have seen him. I won't let you. If you do —well, I'll follow you to the islands you love, if I must! Do you think I would decorate an island?"

"I doubt it," she had rejoined musingly. "It takes peculiar attributes to become the party of the first part on a desert isle. You are not an everyday person. You require a certain setting, environment."

"One may make one's own environment to fit one's tastes. Sort of landscape gardening for the spirit's solace. I am not prepared to let you pass out of my life. You are a mystery I want to solve. I know I have seen you before somewhere."

"It is quite possible," she told him serenely. "I traveled with my husband a great deal."

It keyed her up mentally, to feel that she could fence with his curiosity and keep it at arm's length. After the days on the island, where she had found herself stripped of civilization's needs and demands, all that money had brought her while she was Randy's wife, here she began to relax with relief into the routine of leisure. It could not last longer than a week at most. Her money would not permit it. As soon as she reached Chicago, she would convert one of her rings into cash, but the three hundred dollars Clive had given her would barely carry her through until then.

Yet, she loved the respite the delay gave her. She had longed for freedom without visualizing the kind of freedom that might come to her unawares. Freedom, at best, had meant escaping from Randy to some place on earth where he would never find her. She had sought death itself in the utter, hopeless revolt against conditions which she could not alter. Through a kink of chance or possibly fate, Clive had rescued her, and life had become a desired surety since she had known him.

She had taken his challenge in leaving the island, not because she wanted to, but from pride. If he had loved her and it had been possible, she felt she would have been perfectly satisfied to have shared his life in any way. It had been a revelation to her of herself as a woman, this surrender to love with no other consideration except the love and companionship of another in return. Her one fear in those last days with Clive had been that he would discover her love for him. Rather, she reasoned cynically, that he should think her yielding to his kisses and embrace merely the mood of the hour, like his own.

But now she felt herself parleying with Fate. In her heart she dreaded putting half a world between them. Even at the risk of discovery, she

longed to stay in the localities where he would be liable to meet her if he should return. She longed to know the mystery that lay behind his exile. Was it self-imposed, or had he feigned death to escape some reckoning? She wished she could have asked Carleton. She felt that he knew, but if she had spoken of Clive he would have caught the interest she had in him, and perhaps connected up the sequence of her past.

With Estelle Esteban, too, she felt the utmost caution. The elder woman had an almost eerie sense of subtle reasoning. Beatrice had gone over for tea twice in Carleton's car. Once he had left her alone with his cousin for over an hour, and she had tried to bring the conversation around to Merevale Lomar.

"You would not like her," Estelle said decidedly. "She is one of those ashen-gold women with green eyes. Unsatisfied, taking out her sex vitality in executive efficiency. About twenty-five, now. Extremely clever and ambitious."

"Does she love the man she is marrying?"

"This man Gower? Of course not. She loved Clive Welling."

"And did he—die?" Beatrice held her breath for the answer, her lip pressed to the rim of her teacup.

"Supposed to have been lost at sea on his way to Europe. Delightful fellow. Everything to live for. A father who worshiped him. Simply dropped out of life."

"With no reason? They never found out anything that he may have tried to escape?"

"Nothing personal. Only if he had lived, he would have been the most important witness for the Folwell committee."

"I was abroad at the time," Beatrice murmured. "What was the Folwell committee?"

"Carleton was mixed up in it shamefully. In fact, I have always believed

he instigated the entire scheme, and then dodged responsibility and public suspicion with his usual agility. A certain group of bankers tried to form a *bloc* in both Houses to control some foreign oil concessions. There was talk of bribing and conspiracy. It was hushed up, and the inquiry dropped after Clive Welling's disappearance."

"But I don't see why!"

"Neither does my husband," said Estelle dryly. "I happen to have been a senator's daughter and 'know their tricks and their manners,' so to speak. It was believed that Clive was the go-between of the bankers' interests, that he made the direct proposition at a certain meeting. Under oath, he could have caused a crash unthinkable. Instead, it is believed he stepped into the Atlantic. A ghastly shock to his father and Merevale."

"How pitiful!" Beatrice's face was grave and tender. She could understand, now, his air of assumed audacity, of defiant cynicism, his willingness to bury his identity on the lonely key. "I should like to see Miss Lomar. She must have suffered deeply."

"If she did, she managed to keep the secret!" Estelle smiled maliciously. "She was frightfully in love with Clive, though. Every one saw it. I hate a woman who parades her passion for a man in public. Yet, when Gower appeared with his international prestige she took his offer."

"Would she, do you suppose, had she known that this man Clive was alive?" Beatrice asked the question deliberately, knowing that on the answer, hung her own plan of action.

"I think, right now, with her marriage two days off, if Merevale Lomar were positive Clive Welling was alive, she would stop the other alliance even if she were at the altar."

Beatrice drew in a deep, slow breath. Would she, she asked herself, tell this girl the truth in the next forty-eight

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hours, and give her the chance of choosing between the two men, or would she keep silent, and permit her to place her marriage to David Gower between herself and Clive?

CHAPTER IX.

That evening she had dinner in her own room. Sloane had called up twice, asking her to let him join her, and she had evaded him with the plea of fatigue.

She wanted to be alone, to face squarely the issue of her own plan of action. Half tempted to leave at once for the West, without word to any one she had started to pack, when Sloane was announced. Again, she excused herself, but he had the desk operator put him on her wire, and pleaded for a few words.

"I've got to see you to-night. It is most important—please don't say no. I won't keep you a minute, I promise. Meet me on the upper gallery."

She hung up the receiver, and frowned. The inn was built in Southern Colonial style, huge colonnades in front, with a double gallery, overhung with vines. She changed her negligee for a plain, black velvet gown, threw a white Spanish shawl over her shoulders and went to meet him.

"You're adorable to see me," he said "If it hadn't been of deadly importance to me, I wouldn't have come out to-night. I expect to sail Friday from New York for the Orient."

"To meet me halfway on the other side of the world?" she asked, taking the low willow chair in the shadow. "That is just like you, but why didn't you make it a surprise?"

He dropped restlessly to the swinging hammock, his hands gripped on his knees as he leaned toward her, his eyes two brilliant high lights of intentness.

"I want you to go with me. Now wait!" He put out a restraining hand

as Beatrice half rose from her chair. "I am not half-hearted in this. You have come to mean everything I long for in life—you and wealth. Not just a few millions. I mean wealth that flows out like oil, and is as easy to get. I've been working for it for years, and now it's here. I thought that was all I was after until I looked at you, and then—"

As she tried again to rise, he bent over her suddenly, both hands holding her two wrists, his face close to hers.

"Don't think that I haven't understood you from the minute I saw you at Estelle's. You're on your own, answerable to no one. I know that much. And you've done something and gotten away with it. I haven't guessed that yet, because I don't give a damn what it is; do you hear? I love you, and I want you to go with me to-morrow night!"

"Let go my wrists!" Her tone was sharply imperative. As he released them, she turned deliberately away toward the long glass doors leading to the upper lounging hall. "Good night!"

But he was before her, barring the way with his own figure.

"You can't leave me like this! I tell you every word is the truth. You told me you wanted to go and live out of the beaten track, that you hated cities and civilization. I want to leave everything behind me for the next ten years. I'll take you anywhere you say, and you'll live like a rajah's pet beauty. If you prefer the strait and narrow, we'll get married at the first likely port on the other side. I'm heady to-night because the thing's cinched."

"What thing?" she interrupted him quietly, standing with her back to the casement of the long door, her eyes meeting his.

He lost his own sense of caution at her nearness. In the half light of the moon shining through the vines, her throat and shoulders gleamed with jas-

mine whiteness. He reached toward her almost savagely, trying to pull her into his embrace.

"Don't be a beast, Carleton!" She pushed him away, coolly evading his kiss. "Talk rationally. Just what have you done?"

"I've got the whole damned bunch of Kirdar concessions signed over to yours truly." He laughed down at her, one hand on the casement over her head. "Dave Gower's been after them for over a year. So has old Welling and his little New York band of trusties. But I've got them, see? Sealed, signed and in my own personal keeping. They can't find it out before Monday, and when they do I'll be on my way, sweetheart."

The names he mentioned seized on her memory. The conversation she had had with Estelle Esteban flashed back in her mind, the Folwell committee, that was the group appointed by both Houses to investigate the bankers' *bloc* to control some foreign oil concessions. Rollin Welling had been mixed up in it, and Sloane himself. Clive had been, in some way, the scapegoat.

"I don't understand." She spoke evenly, holding him to the one point she wanted to find out. "You say you have these concessions, that it means a fortune. Then why are you running away? Is it against the law?"

"My most cautious and delectable lady, nothing is against the law if you can get away with it! I have done nothing criminal. Is secret diplomacy a crime? The Kirdar oil concessions happen to be one of the pivotal problems of the hour. I took a credulous and ambitious old gentleman into my confidence through the agency of a woman. She came to this country a year ago, ostensibly the secret agent of the men who controlled the concessions, a group of Levantines. Welling fell for her like a lamb. She persuaded him to get enough backing to line up a *bloc* that

would slip through a bill providing for the purchase of the wells. By a little reciprocal courtesy, so much for so much, it could have been done, when Folwell caught the scent and went after it."

"And this woman?" Beatrice did not take her hand from his clasp. "Who was she?"

"Jealous?" He laughed unsteadily, pressing his lips to her palm. "She's out of it, now. In fact, beloved, she saw through my own personal little designs, and demanded fifty-fifty. I bought her passage for Constantinople eight months ago. You have no cause to worry over her! I have put through the whole deal myself."

"Just what sort of deal have you put through?"

"Alceste Burkan is a Greco-Turkish agent, acting for these same Levantines. Do you see? In ten months the wells have become of international importance. What was a rich prospect when Welling dickered for them, is now incalculable in its value. Welling had an option on the wells. I bought that option from him and resold it to Burkan to-day, part cash, part stock, my dear, in a new company that will make our own Standard Oil take particular notice. Are you satisfied that you are not going to fly with an escaping crook?"

Beatrice smiled back at him with baffling amusement.

"You tell a beautiful fairy tale," she whispered. "Mrs. Esteban warned me thoroughly against your winning ways."

The color darkened his face.

"If you put it that way, I'll show the goods," he said, between set teeth. "Will you go with me if I prove I have these signed papers from Burkan?"

"I'll promise nothing. You're too evasive, too elusive for me. Besides, I don't think, even if it were true, that I should feel interested or even tempted."

She saw the hesitation in his eyes.

Sharply they appraised her, and a slight, crooked smile lifted his lips.

"I can't bring them here to you. Will you visit my private office? I assure you it will not be the end of the third act in a society melodrama. There is nothing incriminating about the office, nothing that could alarm the most conservative of widows. I have the signed papers and checks there in my own wall safe. Five minutes and you can be positive I speak the truth."

"I warn you that I may give you away if I see fit!" She smiled back at him, but with an undercurrent of meaning in her words. "You are taking the chance—not I."

"I'd take any chance in life that would make you believe in me!" He tried again to encircle her with his arms and draw her close to him. She struggled to free herself, but he held her in a powerful, practiced grip, kissing her throat and averted cheek. "Will you go to-night?"

"No. Let me go! I insist. I will go with you to-morrow afternoon. I won't go at night. It is Saturday, and the place will be deserted."

"You swear you will? At four. I'll call for you here."

"Yes," she promised, looking at him provocatively, her long-lashed eyes full of challenge and yet aloofness. "At four."

CHAPTER X.

The realization that she had become involved with the mysterious ring of intrigue which had banished Clive Welling from the living world swept aside for the time her own problem concerning Merevale Lomar.

The wedding was to take place at noon the following day. Before Sloane's arrival, Beatrice had faced the conflict in her own mind, and was ready to see Merevale that evening and tell her the truth. Now, Fate had placed in her hand the key that would set Clive

free, make it possible for him to return. She could piece together the information given her by Sloane with the vague story Clive told her on the island. He had said he was not exiled for his own sins. He was a scapegoat, bearing the burden for a man whom he wished to save from dishonor, a man whose good name was more to him than his own reputation, he had said.

The thing was clear to her now. He had protected his own father, Rollin Welling, the banker, who had been led by Sloane and his woman agent, to try to force through a bargaining bill to purchase the Kirdar wells, ostensibly for the government, but really to be resold to a syndicate at a sacrifice, and manipulated for private gain. Welling had blundered awkwardly in putting the money offer before the Senate *bloc*. Some one had told of a combine to jam the bill through, and Folwell, the young House leader, had leaped to conclusions and suspected Welling. With the danger of an investigation ahead, Rollin Welling's nerve had smashed and his son, Clive, had assumed responsibility for the firm's share in the entire deal. Sloane had become the patient little jackdaw, waiting to run off with the bone after the dogs had been scared away.

She stood at the dressing table in her room, pondering which way to turn, Clive she could not reach. She did not know where to find his father. Instinctively she turned to Mrs. Esteban, who might know. It was after ten when she called the house number. Instead of Elvina's lazy, pleasant tones, she heard a man's voice, deep-toned and hearty.

"Mrs. Esteban? She has retired, I'm sorry to say. Who is speaking, please? Mrs. Beverly? Yes, I am Doctor Esteban. I returned on the eight-twenty train to-night."

Beatrice's hands were cold as she held the receiver and tried to control her

tone. Could he possibly come to her at once? As she caught the hesitation and surprise in his answer, she urged:

"Doctor Esteban, I have a message for you from a friend—Clive Welling. I must see you at once. Something has come up this evening of vital importance to him and his father."

"But you know, of course, that he is dead."

"He is not dead!" she protested. "I have seen him within a week's time. He is alive and well."

"You mean Clive himself is alive?"

"Yes. I could not explain fully to Mrs. Esteban. There is something he wished told only in strict confidence to yourself. Will you come at once? I need advice, and cannot turn to any one but you."

"Surely, I will come, in half an hour." He repeated her name and that of the inn, and hung up at his end of the line. She waited impatiently, returning to the long, open gallery. It was cool here. She paced back and forth until Doctor Esteban's car turned into the curving driveway, and stopped. When he met her in the upper reception hall, she saw a slender, lean-faced man, dark-skinned, calm-nerved, in the fifties. The lines of his face were upturned from a habit of smiling. She knew, at first glance, why Clive had liked and trusted him.

"He has made me promise not to tell you where he is living," she said, after they were seated in the deep willow chairs. "Mr. Welling and myself were waifs of fortune, thrown together through a strange accident of Fate."

"Fate knows no accidents," he smiled back at her. "Personally, I have little faith in Fate. She was a woman, you know—Mœra—and therefore uncertain in her moods. Let us deal with facts. You met Clive Welling, you say, and he is well. I am more than glad of that. Does he know of his father's death?"

Beatrice looked at him in shocked

surprise. She had hoped her news would benefit not only Clive, but that it was to help his father, also.

"I am sure he knows nothing. He receives the New York papers once a week by steamer. It would make all the difference in life to him—" She hesitated. The death of his father would lift the weight of responsibility from Clive. The Folwell inquiry was already a past issue. He could not be used in any way as a witness against Rollin Welling. And he would return to his own world, free and cleared.

It was on her lips to deliver the message Clive had sent for Merevale. It was not too late to give her the solace of knowing he was still alive, in time to stop her marriage to David Gower. A few words, and Esteban himself could call her up and break the news to her. Yet she hesitated, and over her whole consciousness there swept a strange, primitive impulse. This girl did not love him, or she never would have turned to another man within a few months after his supposed death. She was securing wealth, position, all she wanted.

On the other hand, she herself was free to marry no man. Randy Sears, her lawful husband, stood between her and her love for Clive. Yet she felt herself deliberately shaking off every sense of responsibility. She had met the man whom she loved. Given the right chance of freedom, she knew she could rely on the force that had led them to one another's arms that night on the island. He would love her, he *did* love her, she told herself tensely. It was merely the question of honor to this girl who was ready to forget him for another man.

"You say that Clive gave a message to you for me?" asked Esteban mildly.

"Merely that he was alive and well," she found herself saying. "Perhaps he wanted his father to know. The more important thing to-night was informa-

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tion that I stumbled on an hour ago. I think it would absolutely clear him."

She told all she had learned from Sloane of the Kirdar deal. Esteban's finely contoured face wrinkled with annoyance.

"My wife would love this. I hate politics and their filthy tactics. I am a scientist, Mrs. Beverly. My advice would be to stand clear of the entire thing. Of course, if you do it to serve Clive, you hand him a weapon against Carleton that would reinstate him in public opinion. He could show fraud and conspiracy, and sweep the concessions back to the government here instead of letting the Levantine group control them. I don't like to meddle with their game. It's not in my line. I prefer to study nature rather than knavery. If I can help you in any way —Carleton is a distant cousin of Mrs. Esteban. I suppose I should try to cover up his complicity, but frankly, I think it would do him a world of good, perhaps shake him up, and let him get a new focus on things. Good night. You're sure there is nothing else I can do for you?"

"Not a thing," Beatrice assured him. "You think that Clive will come here when he reads of his father's death?"

"Assuredly. As soon as he can make it. Is he in Europe?"

"No," she smiled back, "much nearer. Good night."

CHAPTER XI.

A sense of triumph possessed Beatrice and quieted her nerves, after the departure of Doctor Esteban. Triumph, not over the woman whose claim and interest in the man they both loved exceeded her own, but over her own inhibitions and prejudices.

She had felt no shame whatever in breaking her word to Clive. True, she had not broken it in the strict letter. She had merely refrained from telling Esteban that night. If the girl he had

trusted had kept faith with him, had suffered in his disgrace and exile, had waited for him and saved herself for his return, then she might have sent her the message that he was alive and safe.

As it stood now, she told herself that she had a greater right, even with the obstacle of Randy's prior claim on her. Esteban had said that he did not believe in Fate. But surely there were mysterious, hidden forces of life and death that swayed circumstance to their ends, that took coincidence and bent it to design.

Again and again, after the *Kraaken* had left Key West, she had felt the urge to take the fatal leap from the yacht into the sea. Why had the last, irresistibly impelling longing swept her overboard directly into the path of Clive's motor boat?

The gray path. She smiled dreamily, remembering the ever-widening, beckoning wake of moonlit waters. It seemed to symbolize to her what life had meant with Randy, the hopeless monotone of a loveless marriage. When one came from generations of men and women who had traveled the crimson path of romance and adventure, it was not possible to tread the gray path of monotony.

She stood by the open window, gazing out over the wind-stirred tops of the pines, at the distant view of the river hurrying on. She felt herself torn between conflicting emotions. What wild, unsuspected undercurrent in her nature had made her jealous of the girl whom Clive had undoubtedly loved well enough to intrust with the secret of his safety? And why, at the crucial moment, had she failed to give her the assurance that he was alive? She asked herself these questions over and over; yet every primitive, woman impulse in her rejoiced that she had protected her own right to happiness.

She would keep her appointment with

Sloane. The evidence which she might secure from him would be a factor in her value to Clive when he returned. Yet Sloane and all he represented of the world's futile struggle after material gain, all that men were willing to barter in exchange for their particular little mess of pottage, what did these issues count for against the big elementals of human passion? Sloane himself was ready, now, at the eleventh hour, when he held all he had schemed and worked for in his grasp, to jeopardize the entire culmination by giving her the power to betray him. Merely to gain her love. Ever since the world began, she thought, it had been so. Men had toiled and fought together, and piled up success and fame, and then, one woman's face before them, unattainable, desired above life itself, and they had become like scrambling boys over a prize, staking all they had on the hazard of love.

Early the following morning Estelle telephoned her.

"I want you to go to the Lomar wedding with me. No excuses, my dear. The doctor refuses to disturb his meditations by the sight of Merevale bartering away her young life for wealth and prestige. I think she's showing more sense than I expected. I cannot go alone, and I won't take Elvina. Will you look after me?"

Beatrice agreed. After all, she asked herself, why not? She would enjoy looking at this girl from sheer curiosity. She had a distinct desire to see her, to discover the type of woman who could hold the faith of a man like Clive. The situation thrilled her, too, with its conflicting elements, the menace to herself, the risk she ran in appearing where she might be recognized. It was a challenge to her nerve and courage.

She dressed severely in black, even to the thin veil over her close black turban with its wide, curving osprey tips. It was doubtful if even her mother would have known her in the slender,

foreign-looking woman who walked slowly along the aisle supporting the frail, tense figure of Estelle Esteban. She had determined to attend the wedding, discarding her wheel chair, suffering with every step she took, but missing nothing.

It was like a scene in a dream to Beatrice. The heavy fragrance of flowers, the crush of beautifully gowned women, the undertones of organ music throughout the waiting interlude. Her heart beat faster as she felt herself facing again the alternative of telling Merevale. It was not too late, something reiterated in her mind. She was in the Esteban pew at the back on the center aisle. The bridal party was already forming in the vestibule. She had only to step out, reach the side of the girl and whisper to her that the man she loved was still alive.

Estelle had said she was the kind who would stop the ceremony even at the steps of the altar. It seemed as if she could not bear the weight of guilt, or full responsibility, now that the last opportunity had arrived.

The muffled notes of the organ swelled and broke into the wedding march. There came the rustle of excitement, the turning of heads as the bridal procession moved slowly along the richly carpeted aisle. The perfume of roses and lilies was overpowering. Beatrice's eyes closed as she tried to shut out the sight when they passed her, to bar her senses from the driving temptation that seized her. The little flower girls tripped by, their silvered baskets toppling over with bride's roses. The aisle was showered with the petals. One almost lingered on Beatrice's hand.

She opened her eyes with an effort, hearing Estelle whisper to her to look at the bride. An unusual type of girl, her hair a blur of ashen gold, her profile exquisitely perfect, her lips too full, but firm; eyes almost sea-green in their hazel coloring, lashes light as her hair.

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Beauty and distinction, but lacking—what? Compassion, understanding, sacrifice, tenderness. All of these, Beatrice thought, and more. Charm, most of all. Too self-sufficient, too confident. What was it that Estelle had said of Carleton Sloane? "Troll, to thyself be enough!" She was a troll maiden.

The moment of indecision passed as Beatrice swiftly criticized the girl. No one could look at Merevale Lomar's face as she walked to the altar, and pity her. She was radiant, serene, satisfied!

"Well," said Estelle impatiently, when it was over, and they left the church leisurely, lingeringly, "wasn't I right? Not a pining damsel, eh? Perfectly satisfied with herself and the occasion. Do you imagine that she gave one single thought to Clive Welling while she spoke the words that made her David Gower's wife? I hate that type of woman. No atavistic background of womanhood. All self. 'She wipeth her lips, and saith she hath done nothing.'"

"I thought she was very attractive," Beatrice remarked. She settled back into the cushions of the Esteban car with relief. Yet there came over her a feeling of relaxed well-being and contentment. It was almost startling to discover the latent power one possessed to control the lives of others, direct power for good or evil. She saw ahead her own next course of action, the visit to Carleton Sloane's offices, the seeing with her own eyes the secret, written covenant he had made with the Levantine group. And later on, a few days at most, the hour when she would most surely encounter again the man she dreaded and longed to meet—Clive.

Estelle insisted on taking her to the inn in the car and having lunch with her there. It was tedious when she wanted to relax and plan by herself, but it was the first outing and excitement Estelle had known in months, and she was like a child in prolonging it. Once she touched upon Carleton's attentions.

"Of course, you're living in seclusion on account of your recent bereavement, and I quite understand your attitude, my dear, but Carleton has no discretion. He would just as soon play pirate and seize a woman and carry her off as look at her. He's had some very hectic affairs. I hope you're keeping your head steady with him. He's not worth the powder to blow him up, I assure you, and he's my second cousin. All the Sloanes have a mental kink, think they're men of destiny, or something like that. When are you leaving?"

"Soon," smiled Beatrice. "I hope to leave in a couple of days."

She knew perfectly well that Estelle wanted to ask further questions—why she didn't go at once, what she was waiting for? Probably she thought she was interested in Carleton, after all. The supposition was intriguing. It diverted any thought of Clive, that she might be lingering in the hope of meeting him.

After she had gone, Beatrice parleyed for time. If she kept her engagement that afternoon with Carleton, it would bring matters to a quick focus so far as her relations with him were concerned. He was not the type of man to hold at arm's length and bargain with. He suspected her already, had sensed the fact that she was in flight, as it were, from something. He would not hesitate to use any actual knowledge he might secure as leverage to compel her to accept his offer.

He had said he would sail on Monday. That gave her two days. By avoiding the meeting that afternoon, she would gain time, and wait for the arrival of Clive.

She called up his office within an hour of her appointment. His voice answered eagerly. It was impossible, she said gently, for her to come that afternoon. She was greatly fatigued. He pleaded and she laughed softly.

"You know, I don't believe you," he

said, his tone repressed and vibrant. "I am coming down to the inn to-night."

"On a chance?"

"I've always taken chances. If you think for one minute that I—"

"Better make it before ten," her voice came back serenely. "I am very tired and just a little bit bored. I want to get away as soon as I can, perhaps to-morrow."

"You're going on Monday!"

She laughed again, very softly over the wire, and hung up against his quick remonstrance. With a man of his temperament, opposition and resistance quickened desire and intent. She could not afford to run the chance of being seen meeting him at his office. The less she appeared in public, the safer she repainted. And the delay would keep him near her.

She relaxed utterly, having tea quietly in her own rooms, resting and communing with her own thoughts. The worst was over, the one thing she had dreaded. Merevale was married and on her way to New York on her honeymoon. The heavens had not fallen. And she had kept faith with her own love for Clive, the paramount force, now, in her whole consciousness.

Every day she lingered increased the danger she ran of discovery. Still, they believed her dead. No woman could have leaped overboard that night and lived, they would argue. Randy must have gone on playing cards for nearly an hour before he tired, and went to their stateroom, to find her gone. Another hour wasted in searching for her, in turning the yacht back, and trying the searchlights. She smiled luxuriously, picturing his defeat.

Now and then the thought of her mother and of Rex came to her, but she felt no responsibility toward them. They would be far happier with the assured income Randy would give them, than if she had disappeared and there

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had been a scandal over her desertion of her husband.

No, she told herself, as she lay on the chaise longue by the open windows, her arms under her head, no one really cared whether she lived or died. She was her own mistress, the arbitress of her own destiny. She was free to go where she would—and choice kept her in the one place where she was certain she would meet Clive Welling.

He knew who she was. The thought that she was in his power only brought her nearer to him. He would never dare to let Randy know she was alive! She stopped musing as the telephone bell rang sharply.

"Yes?" she asked. "Who is it?"

The operator's voice came back with drawingl slowness.

"Mr. Welling calling."

Beatrice held her breath, her eyes narrowing and closing in quick thankfulness.

"Ask him to meet me on the upper gallery," she said.

CHAPTER XII.

Following the bell boy to the lounge on the second floor Clive waited there instead of on the outer, vine-shaded gallery.

He would not give her one advantage over him, he thought. No woman tricks of setting the stage for romance. She would meet him here face to face in the full light, and answer for what she had done.

His stop-over in New York for a day at his father's house, had left him without visible evidences of his life on the key, except the deep bronze of his skin, which strikingly accentuated his blue eyes and blond hair. He felt full of energy, of a driving self-confidence. There was only this rage against the woman who had outwitted him and betrayed his confidence.

He had stayed alone on the island

after her departure, restive and impatient. Against his will, he missed her, the elusive spell of her presence there. He found little, feminine evidences of her occupancy of the hut, her water-soaked satin slippers, black, with ridiculously high heels. He had intended to cut them down for her, but she had preferred to wear a pair of Chinese slip-ons of his which she had found.

He had stood looking down at the pillow of palm leaves whose hollow still held the shape of her head and musing, weighing possibilities that might have happened if he had not kept rein on himself.

He took full credit for dominating the situation. He had protected her against her own impulse to turn, on the rebound, to the man who had saved her life. It would have been taking advantage of subconscious forces she did not comprehend, to have let matters take their natural course on the island. On the whole, he was well pleased with himself. There had been one slip of the leash, the night of the storm. But when the memory returned to him, a memory that would leave him standing staring out to sea, bringing up her face before him, her eyes dreamy with love's languor, her wealth of hair over his arm, her yielding, answering lips seeking his, it shook his theory of propinquity.

One day in rummaging around the hut, hunting for something, he came across a rumpled mass of lace, torn, discarded by Beatrice when she had made herself the linen smock. It had been around her shoulders, he remembered, and tangled about his hands when he had seized her as she rose from the sea, and lifted her into the boat. He had taken it out into the sunlight, every nerve in his body responding to the haunting, delicate fragrance that clung to it. Like white violets, he thought, as he laid it on the board table trying to straighten out the torn shreds.

Something had caught in the twisted lace. He disentangled the folds and drew out the lost diamond necklace for which Beatrice had searched. He held it on his palm moodily, a frail chain of platinum, with diamonds set at intervals, a pendant of pure white stones that sparkled like drops of water under the sunlight. Worth thousands, he thought. She had not seemed to care greatly about its loss, but the money would mean further security to her in her flight.

It was in his leather bill book now, an excuse for calling on her. But more, an excuse for an opportunity to let her know she had played crooked with him. He used the phrase to himself baldly. There was no use in mincing words. She had broken faith, lied, deceived him. His pride was deeply wounded over Merevale's marriage. Once in New York, after he had learned of his father's death through the newspapers which came to him weekly from the New Orleans boat, he had remained at the Welling home on Washington Square North. It had been necessary to notify his father's lawyers of his arrival. When the conference with them was over he had called Merevale on long distance. The answer had been brief and enlightening. Mrs. Gower had left that morning, directly after her marriage.

He had then called Doctor Esteban and had talked with him while Estelle was lunching with Beatrice. It was true, he learned. The quiet, friendly voice verified the fact of Merevale's marriage to David Gower. He had asked one question, curtly, bitterly. Had a certain woman seen the doctor and given him the message from him—Clive—that he was alive?

Yes, Esteban assured him. A Mrs. Beverly. She was stopping at the Ridgebrook Inn. He had flung himself into a taxi, and made the next train for Washington. At least he would see her, to return the necklace ostensibly, to get

her conscience and pride under the lash actually.

He stood, cigarette in hand, watching her with lowered head as she stepped along the upper gallery to the lounge, a slender, shadowy, distinguished figure in transparent black. Her face was extraordinarily beautiful. The tan that had deepened its tone on the island had not quite worn off. It gave her a gypsy-like coloring, rich, creamy as a jasmine flower. The rest, too, had improved her. There was a confidence and poise in her manner as she greeted him without embarrassment that added to his resentment against her.

Her glance took in, with a gleam of amusement, the change in his own appearance, a far cry from the beach-comber type who had rescued her.

"Well?" She smiled up at him. "Aren't you going to say anything? Who told you where I was—Doctor Esteban?"

"Yes." He forced his tone to courtesy. "I found this." He laid the necklace in her hand. "After you had gone I was in the hut—it was caught in the lace you wore that night. I knew you would need it."

She looked down at the gleaming jewels with slightly lifted brows.

"It was thoughtful of you. You made the trip to give these back to me, nothing else? How very, very kind!"

At the tinge of sarcasm underlying the words, his anger flamed against her. His eyes, keen, half-closed, watched her steadily until she glanced up with the old challenge in her own, provocative, self-sufficient, baffling him.

"Why did you not give the message as you promised?"

She had her answer ready, planned that afternoon.

"To save her unhappiness. When I discovered that she was going to be married to a man like Gower, I could not bear to put any obstacle in her way."

"You know you're lying to me!" His

voice was bitter, brittle with repression. "You did the thing deliberately! I believe in my heart it was the ruse of a jealous woman."

The taunt hit her fairly. She bit her lip, staring back at him, hating him with her whole heart and soul. Her mind worked quickly, trying to outwit him, to evade this issue he had raised. Worst of all, the accusation had wakened an answer in her own conscience. Had it been as he said, the ruse of jealousy? More than ever, she realized as she looked at him, she loved this man who struck at her with his contemptuous charge.

"I had expected you would think that," she said, controlling her manner and voice. Both held pity, compassion, understanding, all in a maddening degree for him. She took the low, wide armchair under the subdued, golden glow of the floor lamp, at ease and undisturbed apparently. "It is like you to think only of yourself. You are hurt and chagrined, but I can assure you that I acted solely for the girl's sake, not yours.

"Mrs. Esteban has talked very freely to me concerning both of you. I did not tell her anything, but waited until Doctor Esteban came back. As for your saying that I was jealous of you"—she gave a little deprecating gesture with her hand—"that is absurd! We were both the victims of propinquity on the island. I was quite as much to blame as yourself. But now, we are civilized again, I hope. Stabilized, rather, back to the norm."

"Then why are you staying on here?" he demanded with brutal frankness. "You waited, womanlike, for the chance of laughing at me, enjoying the result of your tender consideration of my late fiancée."

"No"—she was very gentle, patient to the extreme, he thought savagely—"I was not waiting to see you, Mr. Wellington. I have another motive entirely."

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A bell hop drew near them, sauntering down the lounge. Beatrice glanced at the card he handed her, and smiled.

"I'm afraid I shall have to ask you to excuse me. Another time, perhaps. I shall be here for several days longer. Good night."

He hesitated doggedly, but her eyes were serene and mystifying. Some one came quickly up the wide, balconied stairway, turned and made for the corner where they had been sitting. As Clive recognized her caller, he was conscious of a new, sharp revulsion of feeling, something entirely unexpected and foreign to his nature, he would have said. As he returned Carleton Sloane's surprised nod of recognition, he felt he could have fought with him then and there for the right of possession over this woman who belonged to neither of them.

CHAPTER XIII.

After Clive had gone Sloane lighted a cigarette with deliberation, giving Beatrice the opportunity to make excuses, to explain the presence of the man who could block his entire game if he held the evidence on the Kirdar deal.

Had she led him along to this end, he wondered, playing him neatly for a fool, in order to deliver him over to Clive Welling? The line of connection was suddenly clear to him. She had come ostensibly with a message to Doctor Esteban. Esteban had been a friend of Welling's before the latter's disappearance. And she had lingered on, day by day, increasing his interest and attraction by apparently ignoring both. Yet, at the time appointed, when she could have seen with her own eyes the evidence against him, could have learned everything that would have been of value to Clive, she had broken the engagement. The reason was self-evident, he thought. Clive had returned unexpectedly, and she had met him here to-night to report progress.

As he reasoned the whole situation out to himself, the flare of anger he had felt against her died away, leaving him with his usual grip on his nerves. She smiled at him slightly as he took the chair Clive had so recently vacated.

"Well"—his eyes met hers with full disbelief in anything she might say—"you let him cut in neatly, didn't you? When did he get back?"

"I don't know. He neglected to notify me in advance."

"But you did know him before to-night?"

"Somewhat."

"Why did you refuse to see me, and let him come in my place?"

She lifted deprecating shoulders.

"Just what is your place—here?"

He reached over, gripping her two hands closely.

"Just exactly what I choose to make it. What bargain have you made with Welling on the Kirdar deal?"

"I have never spoken of it to him."

"He does not know anything of what I told you, you expect me to believe that?"

"As you please. It is the absolute truth."

"Then prove it to-night—now! Will you come with me to see the proofs at my office?"

She hesitated for a full minute while he watched her quietly. If she refused, he would believe that Clive had warned her. If she went, and succeeded in securing the full evidence, she would have it in her power to betray him to the Fowell group through Welling.

"Very well, I will go to-night, but I do not commit myself to any promise. It is absolutely immaterial to me what you do or where you go. You do understand that, don't you?"

"Perfectly." His eyes disputed her words with cynical amusement. "You go as a free agent, merely to humor

me. Take a heavy cloak with you. It's rather cool driving into town."

In her room she thought of telephoning to Estelle, telling her where she was going. It would offset any move on Sloane's part to trick her. Estelle would tell Clive, and he would draw his own conclusions, from the encounter at the hotel, that it had been prearranged. She had told him that she was staying on for another motive than waiting to meet him again. This would prove it. She called up casually, asked after Estelle's reaction from the exertion of the day, and mentioned that she was going for a drive with Sloane in his car. It was the maid who took the message. Mis' Estelle had already retired, she said.

When they were speeding along the smooth, level road toward the city, Beatrice muffled the collar of her cape closely around her throat, and settled back in silence. Sloane, too, was silent. Sitting low, his cap pulled over his eyes, he sent the low, underslung two seater spinning ahead until they crossed the bridge and turned into the city thoroughfares. It was after ten, Beatrice noticed as they passed a clock. He drew up at the curb before a building which seemed to be a club.

"I thought you said we were going to your office?" she said easily, as she stepped out of the car. "This looks more like the gay bachelor quarters of the wicked lord."

"We keep this place for special conferences." He went ahead, opening the outer vestibule doors with a pass-key. A watchman sat at the recessed desk in the lower hall. Sloane nodded to him, and led the way into the single elevator. At the fifth floor, he unlocked the door of a suite, and stood aside for her to pass.

She entered with a curious mingling of thoughts. Above all—suspicion of him, the belief that he was deliberately trying to land her in a blind alley from which there would be no escape—above

all she felt the old confidence in herself, the same fearless authority over chance and opportunity that had come to her in situations with Randy. There was something about Sloane that reminded her of her husband, in his utter abandonment to the passion of the moment. With Clive, it was different. She sensed his reason fencing constantly with his emotions. He stood on guard against impulse, discounting the effect of love, overruling nature as he had on the island.

She slipped out of her long velvet cape, and sauntered around the long room looking at various objects; the view of the avenue from the windows, the electric lighting on dark masses of foliage. It was evidently, as Sloane had told her, a room used for private conferences. Severely furnished in mahogany, one long, heavy table, with leather-seated armchairs drawn up to it, mirrors, mahogany paneling, desks. It was not the setting for a sentimental rendezvous.

Sloane had crossed the room, opened the largest desk and taken up a squat, bronze figure of a crouching mandarin. She did not notice his actions. Far down the Potomac, some boat was signaling, flashing searchlights back and forth across the southern sky. The sight brought back to her mind startlingly, the night on the island when she had watched the *Kraaken* sending out its pointing fingers of light after her.

Sloane pushed a catch spring in the base of the image, removed a small, thin key, and opened the inner compartment of a wall safe.

"In case of accident, I prefer caution," he said. "There are the contracts. Your eyes are the only ones that have seen them, except my own. You see, I have a peculiar aversion to being thought a four-flusher."

She seated herself at the table, and looked over the papers without comment. They conveyed to Carleton

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Sloane for a certain consideration, twenty-five per cent of stock in the Kirdar Oil Company, together with fifty million dollars, to be paid in certain installments as agreed.

"Did I exaggerate?" he asked.

"They're not worth a cent if the truth were known, are they?" She glanced up at him with a little, provoking smile. "This is contingent, of course, on your not being found out? Did you have full authority and power to sell the concessions?"

"Everything. Welling was only too glad to get rid of the whole incriminating thing." He tossed other papers out to her from the steel drawer, records of the transfer. She read them over with a puzzled frown, papers similar to those conveying certain amounts and stock to Sloane, only with Rollin Welling's name in place of his. Sloane sat on the edge of the long table, smoking quietly, meeting her gaze finally, with a confidence that troubled her.

"You see, now, why I was not afraid to bring you up here; in fact, why I wanted you to see these papers? I have positive proof here that Clive Welling's father was a clever, international confidence man. A banker. Oh, yes, trusted, famous, a man whose advice was sought on all questions of international credit, and who used the inner knowledge he possessed to juggle deals like this. I could have smashed him any minute I felt like it, and, believe me, he knew it! Folwell had the goods on him absolutely.

"Your friend Clive perjured himself before the committee, swore that his father was not present at a certain meeting when this was signed, that he never was cognizant of the secret covenant made with the Levantine group; preserved the halo on father's noble brow, so to speak, and ducked the country himself, so that they could not bring him up before the Senate committee later on in court. Naturally, as the ju-

nior member of the firm, he got the full weight of blame. Welling, senior, said nothing. His convenient death permitted his son to return home."

He waited for her to speak. Her mind worked rapidly, doubling on its own tracks as if pursued, suggesting one way out after another. She could feign sudden illness, send him after restoratives, and destroy the papers. She could bargain with him, agree to go abroad with him if he gave her the Welling papers. Clive would be glad to have them, the proof of his father's guilt and complicity. There could be some way of outwitting Sloane when it came to payment on her part. He held out his hand for the papers as if he read her thoughts.

"I keep them here, as I say, in case of some accident to myself. If you decide to leave earlier, we can go straight on to New York on the midnight train to-night. In that event, I will take them with me now."

"I'd rather have until to-morrow to decide," she said. "Shall we go now?"

He stood opposite her as she rose, nonchalant, unimpressed. His eyes were full of suppressed fires, but she did not even see them. She was looking back over her shoulder at the searchlight moving fanwise across the sky beyond the city. It brought back, as nothing else could have done, the fact that somewhere Randy existed, an element in her life to be reckoned with, unless she put Clive Welling out of her consciousness, and followed the gray path that had beckoned to her.

"You know I could——"

"But you won't!" She laughed at him, her eyes frank and unafraid as she drew on her long gloves. "You are far too clever a strategist to spring your dénouement before the right moment. There is one comforting pleasure about dealing with you. Neither you nor I use any camouflage. I think we understand each other perfectly, don't you?"

He replaced the papers in the steel

drawer, locked it, closed the round wall safe before he answered her. His face was a bit set in its lines, taut muscles under drawn flesh, his lips compressed.

"Perfectly, Mrs. Sears!" he said quietly, with exaggerated courtesy as he held her cape for her.

The name she had not heard in weeks hit her like a blow.

"If you give me away to Clive Welling, I shall be compelled to force your hand—but I don't want to. You believe that, I know. I want you to come willingly." He waited for her to speak. With lowered lashes over revealing eyes, she stood fastening the loops of her heavy monk's-hood collar. How had he found her out, she wondered? A flash of memory, probably. He had remembered meeting her somewhere, he had told her at Esteban's. Now, it had come to him—the dinner at which they had both been guests after her marriage.

Suddenly he was holding her fast, her arms pinned close, as he kissed her.

"I don't care how you come to me, do you hear?" he whispered. "I'll wait until to-morrow noon, and expect you to join me at the station, then."

"Wouldn't it be safer to motor?" Her eyes opened widely to his. "We could leave to-morrow night."

CHAPTER XIV.

She had made up her mind to finality. After the trip back in the car with Sloane, listening to his plans, giving him every possible assurance that she would keep her word, Beatrice faced the burning of her bridges behind her with a sense of relief.

He was right. She could not escape from the fact that she was Randy Sears' wife—at least, not yet. Some day, please God, she told herself with suppressed bitterness, she would find a safe place where she could secure a quiet, sealed divorce, and cut the legal tie between them.

But now, in order to purchase her freedom, she must keep Randy in ignorance of her being still alive. And Sloane had it in his power to betray her to her family. Rather, she would barter with him and secure protection.

She packed quickly without inward fear or nervous haste. After she had settled her bill, she sent a telegram to Clive Welling in care of Doctor Esteban. It was without compromise or subtlety, simply the request that he see her at nine that morning at the inn.

She rested after sending it, relaxing, focusing her mind on what lay ahead of her. She would have the stones removed from the necklace, and dispose of them somewhere. She closed her eyes, against the future's uncertainty. Might there not be some aftermath granted her from the Fate she had always refused to believe in? If Clive loved her, he would follow her. But with the thought there came crushingly the remembrance of his voice, the look of contempt in his eyes when he had said it was the ruse of a jealous woman, her keeping back his message to Merevale. And was he not right, after all?

It was quarter of nine when he was announced. She had breakfasted early, and was waiting for him in the lounge. It was deserted at this hour. He gave a sharp, inquiring glance at her traveling gown of plain black, her close-fitting black turban with its sweeping plume of *cog noir* feathers curving to her shoulder. The severity of the style suited her perfectly, he thought. Her eyes seemed more brilliant by contrast, her lips accentuated in their rich coloring.

"I am leaving to-day," she said without reserve or parley.

"Are you leaving with Sloane?"

"Why?" she asked curtly.

"Because"—he rose and faced her, took a few steps toward the balcony and returned, restless, unsettled—"the man's a rotter. I can't stand by and see

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any woman smash her life on the rocks with him. In the first place, you've got no right—now, wait until I finish—I mean, you are still a married woman. You know as well as I do, the fate of the white woman who elopes to the Orient with her lover, thinking no one will know. Everybody knows. She is cut off from her own kind, ostracized, besmirched by every stableboy and waiter who smirks at the latest scandal of foreigners. If that's what you're aiming for, I wish to Heaven I had let you go under that night!"

"I wish you had!"

The low, thrilling passion of her voice stirred him strangely. Against his will, it brought back vividly the crucial moments of their life together on the isolated key. He felt the old urge toward her, the temptation to yield to her charm and attraction for him almost overmastering him. But the thought of her deliberate deception restrained him. A man under the same circumstances and conditions, he told himself, would have kept his word at all hazards. A woman was the victim of her own emotions, or her whim of the moment. As Beatrice met his gaze, something of his thoughts seemed to reach her.

"Thank you for the advice," she said easily. "I am sorry, but I am leaving here within an hour."

"If you go with this fellow Sloane, I shall notify the authorities that you are alive." The old glitter of conflict was in his eyes as he felt her freedom from his influence. "I'd rather you were back on the key for the rest of your life than this."

She laughed softly, rising.

"Alone? No, I think not. The male becomes an essential feature on a desert isle and after our recent experience I find nothing alluring in the prospect. Thank you, and—good-by."

She held out her hand carelessly. Clive hardly touched it in his quick, re-

sentful clasp. He stood staring at her with a frown.

"Don't you need money?"
"I have my necklace."

"Are you going with Sloane?" he demanded again with a certain touch of dominance in his tone, of contemptuous arrogance, that infuriated her. What right had he to ask anything about her future plans? She smiled with deliberate, elusive subtlety.

"Doubtless, I am."

"Wait! Do you know that the *Kraaken* lies in New York harbor? Your husband is registered at the Ambassador. He gave an interview to the morning papers."

She did not raise her lashes at his words, though they seemed to stop the beating of her heart.

"Then it will be all the easier for you to reach him, won't it?" she said gently.

When Clive had gone, she went back to her room and stood at the window, gazing steadfastly out over the masses of foliage, her eyes misty with tears. The gray, beckoning path. Why, at this supreme moment had he failed to realize the gift of her love, of all it meant to her—his silence in the hour of decision?

She knew her power to rouse him, her attraction for him, knew that if he would rid himself of his pride and resentment of what she had done, he would realize his love for her. And yet, she asked herself bitterly, would he? It seemed queer in this day of compromise, to find a man who held to the old standards of right and wrong, who would put love aside to quibble over a point like this, her breaking faith with him. She wondered if Esteban had told Clive of her sending for him and saying nothing of the message he had sent to Merevale.

She left the inn at ten, taking a car directly for the station in Washington. At the same time Clive walked the floor

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in Estelle Esteban's sunny living room. She watched him with unwinking, sparkling eyes, her thin, porcelain-white hands gripping the arms of her invalid chair. Almost she enjoyed seeing a man like Clive Welling lose his control and nerve.

"I could have told you what was going on. I did not know who she was, but any woman could have told she was facing some crisis, and Carleton is a good antidote. He knows us better than you do, Clive. You ignore our frailties and refuse to cater to our privileges. I don't blame Beatrice one iota for the way she chose to go. She's a fool, but she's a wise fool.

"I believe that when she came here she was mad about you. I believe that she double-crossed you because she was jealous. Why not? I admire her for it. Spirit and initiative. Self-protection is nature's first law. You have acted like a self-righteous man whose private treasure house has been burglarized, ever since you heard Merevale was married. You tell me now that you went to Beatrice and accused her, and you dare to come here now, flare out that she is eloping with Carleton Sloane, and appeal to me to help you stop them! What right have you to interfere?"

"I saved her life when she was throwing it away. I won't have Sloane wrecking it now! He's caught her on the rebound, when she doesn't care what happens next!"

"Has she left the inn?"

"Yes. I just called up. I don't know which way they went, east or west. You can understand, Estelle, the responsibility I feel toward her and her family, too."

"What's her family got to do with it?" The corners of Estelle's mouth quivered slightly.

"I should have notified them, of course—" He stopped short as Doctor Esteban entered the room from his morning ride. He listened, keen-eyed,

silent, as his wife told why Clive had come.

"You wouldn't catch them at the station," he said calmly. "Sloane passed me on the wooded path above the inn in his touring car. He probably went after her, and you don't know which route they took. I am sorry for her. Brilliant, embittered, on the verge of surrender to anything that promised relief! Didn't you see this coming, Clive?"

"No, he didn't," Estelle interposed caustically. "He's crazy over Merevale. He had no ears or eyes for any other woman. And he has just told me the truth about Beatrice Sears. He saved her life when she tried to drown herself by leaping off her husband's yacht. They lived on your island together."

"I got her to the mainland as soon as I dared," Clive explained, catching the expression of the doctor's eyes. "There was absolutely nothing between us. I merely asked her to come to you, and give Merevale the message that I was alive. She did not keep her word. It would have stopped the wedding if she had!"

"No, it would not!" said Doctor Esteban quietly. He took the seat by the open window, leaning over to pat the lifted head of Lomond Boy, Estelle's collie. "After my interview with Mrs. Sears at the inn when she sent for me the night of my arrival, I called up Merevale myself when I got back home. I told her that I had heard from you, and you were alive and well. She married Gower just the same."

Clive stared at him with blank incredulity as the full meaning struck him. Merevale had known he was alive, and had carried out her marriage with Gower without recognizing his own claim over her, their engagement, love, faith, anything. He turned to Estelle with heavy, troubled eyes.

"How can I stop her?"

"Tell her husband. She'll thank you

for it," said Estelle curtly. "Carleton's a scamp. He never was anything else. Thank goodness, he's no blood kin of mine!"

"I can't do that. It would be devilish for her, you know that, Estelle. I want to get Sloane. I could cause his arrest now on evidence I found among Dad's papers, but if I do, it reacts on her. Suppose she loves him——"

"Just a minute." The doctor rose to answer the telephone in the outer hall. They could hear his voice, but could not catch his words. Estelle listened impatiently.

"That's from the inn," she said. "Queer, unless she's come back there."

They waited until the doctor stepped into the room again. He held his eyeglasses in one hand, eyebrows lifted, his eyes twinkling with amused dismay.

"Carleton left a telegram for me at the inn, to be telephoned over. A little vague, but you may read between the lines." He glanced at the slip of paper he had set the message down on. "Leaving for New York. Will see S. Party has left with W." It appears to me, Clive, as if you have both jumped to the same conclusion, that she was leaving with the other man. She has gone alone. You'd better get to Sears first, before Carleton has a chance to tell him a pack of lies."

Estelle's eyes were half closed, watching the changing expression on Clive's face.

"Stand there and argue to yourself, hesitate, wash your hands clean of the whole affair!" she said. "Do anything in God's world, but try to make amends to the girl for the position you put her into! I can tell you now that she loved you."

"My dear, a married woman——" protested the doctor.

"Stuff! Marriage never held a woman's heart in leash yet. A contrivance, a compromise, a leap in the dark. Beatrice is volatile, capricious, desper-

ate, too, but she's not a fool. She would love you to the end of her life, Clive Welling, and never give you the satisfaction of knowing it. Get over to New York and head off Carleton's play! You owe her that, at least. I'd like to see his face when you walk in."

Clive looked down at the curious, restless figure imprisoned by pain in the winged chair, at the quizzical, friendly eyes that seemed to challenge him, now, to rise to her estimate of him. And she was right, he told himself. It was the least he could do, to try to ward off the blow that Sloane aimed at the woman he had lost.

"I'll go at once," he said.

But all the way to the station in his low, high-powered car, he puzzled over Beatrice's action. She had certainly led him to think that she intended leaving with Sloane. At least, she had not cared what he thought. On the other hand, Sloane himself had been baffled and misled by her. And where had she gone? Had the islands finally lured her to their promise of rest? He wondered, remembering all she had told him of her childhood there. She had the diamond necklace. It could not be worth less than twenty thousand dollars.

Estelle's words recurred to him, and a vivid, disturbing reminder of his own personal memories verified them. Would a woman of her type have yielded her lips to him so freely, that night on the island, unless she had loved him? He had sensed surrender then, and had deliberately put the suspicion from him. Now, the remembrance spurred his thoughts ahead. If he could trace her, find her in some forgotten corner of the world, would she turn to him again in that close embrace of perfect abandon they had known in the storm?

The thought fired his imagination. His love for Merevale had been a delight of mutual tastes, serene, restful, This was a divine, disturbing thing that

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haunted his mind and swept aside all caution and inhibition. Yet he had warned her himself against such a fate as he could offer so long as she was Randy Sears' wife. He fancied he could see her face were he even to propose such an existence for the two of them, the little lurking half smile on her lips, the elusive, understanding pity of her eyes that had always irritated him, combating, as it did, his own will.

Leaving his car at the garage, he caught a passing taxi for the station and made his train, just two hours after Sloane had left over the same route.

CHAPTER XV.

Randy's suite was on the second floor of the Ambassador. It was the one he always occupied when whim led him to New York. Some clerk with a knowledge of human nature had told him once that a royal personage had reserved it while in the city, and Randy had enjoyed spending a fraction of his time in the rarefied atmosphere, thereafter.

But this time it held sad memories for him. A slender, haughty ghost haunted it—Beatrice as he had last seen her that night on the yacht, her face jasmine pale in the moonlight, with the look of utter weariness and disdain.

Not that he ever held himself accountable for her death. It had been an accident. Of that he was positive. Had she not had everything to live for? The first day of his arrival there had been a meeting of condolence with Rex and his mother, and it had pleased Randy to assume full dignity and responsibility, as Beatrice would have wished, he argued. He assured Mrs. Farnsworth that the recent loss that had saddened all their lives would have no effect on her income or on Rex's prospects. He would continue to act as the family purse.

The answering outburst of maternal tenderness gratified his self-respect and

pride. He had waved off further demonstrations with airy bounty, and had devoted himself, later, to giving to all interested friends and press representatives graphic accounts of Beatrice's disappearance and his own efforts to recover the body. And, curiously enough, the more he dwelt upon the tragedy, the greater became his own part in it. His was the infinite loss. It was the end of a perfect love and matehood. He had devoted his entire existence to making her life an unending symphony of beauty and happiness, ideal, the realization of earthly romance.

When he was alone, Randy dwelt so long upon the picture he had conjured up that self-pity suffused his consciousness, and he broke down in sobs over his favorite photograph of Beatrice. Here Rex had surprised him in his grief, and had dragged him out unwillingly to dinner at a dance club where some meager solace might be meted out.

It was shortly past ten when Carleton Sloane arrived at the Ambassador. He felt cheated, and no one could have held a more righteous indignation against the pair who had defrauded him than he himself, who had cheated at every turn of life's game.

Given every assurance that she would go with him, he had gone to the inn after Beatrice that morning, only to learn that she had left half an hour before. Inquiry had given him, also, the knowledge that she had sent for Clive and of their visit together that morning.

The telegram left at the inn to be sent to Doctor Esteban had been his first shot at the woman who had outwitted him. He would expose her at every turn. With the morning papers full of Randy's personal account of the tragedy at sea, and Beatrice's photograph featured on every front page, it would be hard for her to pass the gauntlet of public opinion.

Heading back for the city at full

speed, he reached the private office where he had taken her that night. Removing the incriminating papers from the wall safe, he took them with him. If she had deliberately planned to deliver him into Clive's power, there would be no evidence left against him.

A telephone call to Clive's club gave him the information that he had left there before breakfast, and had not returned. He checked the impulse to call up the Estebans and speak with Estelle. Of all people, she gauged his moral caliber best. He never could face with entire equanimity her clear, comprehending eyes and little sneering smile.

Ascertaining at the station that he could get a New York train within half an hour, he decided to leave on it. She had outplayed him so far on every point, but he still held it in his hands to betray her absolutely to her husband.

She should not get away clear, he told himself. He would start the story of her escapade and dishonor at the one spot where it would blaze beyond control. And he would do it in such a way that it would redound to his credit. Though he deemed it his duty to notify her husband, it was merely to save her, to prevent her leaving the country with a man who had been under a cloud as an indicted witness.

And he would go to Randy Sears, not on his own responsibility, but as an emissary from Beatrice's woman friend, his cousin, Estelle Esteban. He smiled to himself at this fresh inspiration. It gave an added tinge of satisfaction to the affair, involving Estelle without her knowledge.

He was told at the desk that Mr. Sears was not in his room. While he was being paged, Sloane waited, glancing over the sailing chart for Europe and South America. When Randy strolled along the corridor toward him, he appeared oblivious to all else, absorbed and intent until he was addressed.

"Something about my wife?" Randy repeated in open-eyed alarm. "But she's dead, man, you know that! Who sent you, did you say?"

"I have come from my cousin, Mrs. Esteban," repeated Sloane firmly, but conveying just the right touch of compassion. "May I talk with you alone, Mr. Sears?"

"But I'd rather have somebody with me," Randy faltered a bit helplessly. "Mrs. Sears' brother just left me——"

"It would be better if nobody but yourself heard what I have to tell you!"

Randy stared back at him with irritated dread. He hated disturbing episodes, and something in the other man's tone warned him of danger. He led the way unwillingly up to the second floor, along the west corridor and into the large corner suite. The door was not locked when they entered, but in his excitement he did not notice it.

He pushed a chair to the table, lighted a cigarette nervously, and waited, his eyes blinking at the thin, handsome face of his visitor.

Sloane took his time with dramatic effect. He glanced about the high-ceiled room. Three doors opened from it, one into the entrance vestibule, two into inner bedrooms, one at either end. Heavy, velvet draperies hung to the floor before these.

"You're sure we're alone——" he began.

"Sure. I took this to-day, always stop here, reserved specially. Got a couple of Jap valets, but they're never around at this time. Don't expect me back till twelve or after. Fire ahead!"

Sloane seated himself on the opposite side of the narrow library table, permitting himself a moment of consideration while Randy stared at him with beads of perspiration slowly rising and glistening on his forehead.

"Mrs. Sears is alive!" he said finally.

"Where?" gasped Randy incredulously.

"Now, control yourself, old man!" There was authority in the other's tone. "This situation calls for the utmost calmness and decision on your part. There is nobody can handle it but you. I have seen and talked with her in Washington several times, at the home of my cousin, during the past two weeks. She has been under an assumed name and—"

"Maybe she lost her memory," Randy broke in hopefully. "They do, after a shock, you know. Can I get her on long distance?"

"No, you cannot. She left there this morning, just as we were sure who she was from the newspaper accounts and photographs. In fact, I should have known her at once. If you will remember, I met you both shortly after your marriage at a dinner given by Hale Knowlton here in New York."

"We were there," Randy assented mournfully. "She wore a gown I loved, gray over silver, beautiful. Wasn't she the loveliest creature you ever laid your eyes on? If ever a woman had devotion lavished on her! Anything her heart desired, anything—didn't matter how much it cost—it was hers! I said from the night it happened it was an accident. Who picked her up?"

"The man she has left with to-day!" Sloane sprang his news delicately, but even he was unprepared for the effect on Randy. For the instant he looked as if seized by a paralytic shock, his hands gripping the arms of his chair, his jaw dropping in a contorted spasm of horror. Then he regained control of his muscles, half rose from the chair and leaned toward Sloane.

"It's a damned lie!" he roared out like an infuriated child. "She never loved any man but me. It's a cursed lie!"

"Sorry, Sears, but I'm afraid you're merely one more man in the discard. She was saved by Clive Welling of Washington. He's been in hiding some-

where for months. You know the Welling case. Old man died last week. I am piecing up the case from deduction in places, but I know he followed her to Washington and met her there. She had brought a message for him to Doctor Esteban. My cousin felt a certain responsibility in the matter, having unwittingly sheltered and befriended her without knowing who she was—"

"But where is she now?" cried Randy, starting from his chair to pace the floor. "You tell me this, man, but what am I to do if she's gone?"

"You're got money enough to find them anywhere on earth," Sloane said quietly. "You're her husband. It's your place to protect her from herself. Get the best detectives after them. And smash Welling!"

"But why did she go with him when she loves me?" Randy's voice broke like that of a defrauded child, protesting. "I don't believe she went willingly. You don't know her like I do."

He stopped at the ringing of the telephone.

"All right, hello? Say, I can't see anybody," he faltered. "What? Say it again!" He listened keenly. "Send him up."

Replacing the receiver, he rose, hands in his pockets, and grinned at Sloane.

"We've got him," he announced. "That's Welling."

CHAPTER XVI.

Sloane's face was a mask of impassive unconcern as Clive entered the apartment. Smoking his cigarette slowly, he acknowledged the other man's arrival with an easy nod, and let Randy handle the situation as he pleased. Whatever he may have feared from Clive's unexpected presence there, he gave no sign outwardly.

Randy stared at the man who, he had just been told, had robbed him of his wife. The red color surged to his

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plump, clean-shaven face until it seemed empurpled. His under lip protruded as it always did when he was aroused or crossed. His small, light-blue eyes narrowed under their sandy lashes, the pupils lessening as he eyed his visitor menacingly. Sloane's last suggestion stuck in his mind. He was to break him, this trespasser into his perfect paradise. His reason did not work quickly enough for him to question why, if he had stolen Beatrice's love, Clive Welling would come directly to him.

"I see I am too late," Clive said quietly. "I hoped to spare you the unnecessary shock of what I feel sure Mr. Sloane has told you. I—"

Sloane smiled slightly, untroubled.

"Where did you leave her?" he asked. "You left Washington together this morning."

Clive strove for control, with every nerve on edge to seize the man before him and force the truth out of him.

"I left Mrs. Sears at the Ridgebrook Inn about nine this morning." He addressed himself to Randy. "She merely told me that she was leaving."

"But before that?" Randy's voice rose explosively. "You knew her long before she got as far as Washington. You saved her life that night when she jumped from my yacht. You took advantage of an excited, nervous woman, I tell you, but she never cared a damn for you, understand? She loved me! If she was standing right here this minute, she'd tell you the same!"

"Possibly you could tell Mr. Sears where you both spent the two weeks from the night of her disappearance to the day that I met her at my cousin's home in Washington. This would clear up considerable doubt. Why the delay in notifying her people that she was saved? Why did she take another name when she came North? It looks"—Sloane changed the word on his lips at Clive's steady glance—"prearranged."

"Yes," Randy stuttered, "where the

devil were you all the time I was spending thousands searching the sea for her body? What's the idea? We weren't thirty miles off the main coast."

"Mrs. Sears did not wish any one to know where she was. I respected her wishes."

"Like hell you did!" Randy's tone broke into an injured roar. "You kept her against her will, took advantage of a helpless, beautiful woman, tried to steal her from her own husband—"

"That is quite enough!"

All three men started at sound of the evenly cadenced voice that came from the inner bedroom on the right. Standing in the arched doorway, one hand holding back the velvet drapery, Beatrice watched them with a curious, detached disdain. Self-possessed, rather weary-eyed, clad in plain black, she surveyed the three men, a little half smile of amused contempt on her lips as she saw their amazement.

Randy was the first to recover his nerve. He started toward her, both arms extended, his plump, flushed face breaking into a smile of joy.

"Sweetness!" he cried exultantly. "Did she come right straight to her own little boy—"

"Please, please!" Beatrice's white, slim hand stopped him. She came leisurely forward to the table, leaned one hand on the edge, and met Sloane's eyes. "You see, you are quite mistaken. I merely arrived a trifle earlier than you. And I left Washington alone. I came directly here to see Mr. Sears myself."

"Straight to her husband!" Randy asserted haughtily. "And you've been trying to stir up a rotten scandal about her. What do you mean, anyhow, Sloane?"

Sloane smiled, irony in his eyes and manner.

"I acted from the highest motives, believe me!" he said. "Merely to please Mrs. Esteban—"

"Mrs. Esteban had nothing whatever to do with your being here," Clive cut

in. "I was with her and the doctor up to the time I left. Your telegram saying you were coming to New York to Sears was telephoned from the inn while I was there."

"Well, you can go back there and tell them all that she came straight here to me, to her own husband," Randy repeated. "Very decent of you, Welling, to try to head this thing off."

"After the mystery thrown around Mrs. Sears' rescue," Sloane resumed meaningly, "it was only natural for her friends to suspect possible—collusion."

He succeeded in switching Randy's wandering mind back to the point at issue. He stared from Clive's face to Beatrice's with quick suspicion.

"Yes, that's it, collusion. Why did you two try to keep me from knowing she was alive, and where were you?"

"I will tell you." Beatrice looked across the table at him almost pityingly. She seemed another woman—not the girl whom he had married. All fear of consequences had left her. She did not even think of her family, and how the thing she was about to do might react on them. She had only pity and a touch of contempt for this man who had been her husband. She had overheard every word among the three, all of Randy's boasting that he alone possessed her love, and her own reaction made it easier to speak the truth to him now.

"I jumped from the yacht deliberately. I meant to kill myself——"

"But why?" groaned Randy. "When you had me!"

"That was why. I would rather have died than to have gone on living with you. Can you understand that? I did not hate you, Randy, but it came to be torture to have you near me. So I fell into that path of moonlight in the wake of the yacht. Mr. Welling happened to be in a motor boat off the coast of a small key where he had a camp. He rescued me, and took me to the island. No boats ever stopped there. The

weather was bad. We waited for a clear day when we could make the trip to the mainland. That is all."

"But you lived there together all that time—and he met you in Washington when you hadn't sent me one word."

"Yes." Her eyes were serene and untroubled as they rested on Clive's tense face. "But there is absolutely no cause for anxiety, Randy. I can swear that Mr. Welling never felt the slightest thrill over me. He was engaged to marry a girl in Washington, and made my freedom conditional on my delivering a message to her from him. That is why I went North. The Estebans know this is the truth. He never loved me, not for a single moment."

Clive winced at the accusing challenge in her tone which was directed solely at himself. Never had she seemed so beautiful, so desirable, so gloriously thoroughbred compared with other women, as now, standing there defending herself.

But Sloane eyed her keenly through the slight veil of the smoke between them, his arms folded on his breast.

"And this message, Mrs. Sears," he asked pleasantly, carelessly, "you delivered it?"

"Doctor Esteban himself delivered it after seeing Mrs. Sears." Clive's glance fenced with his. Beatrice drew in her breath slightly, closing her eyes in relief at the escape he had afforded her. This was news to her, that Esteban had told Merevale. A sense of swift triumph and satisfaction swept over her as she realized the smashing blow it must have been to Clive's pride, that the girl married in spite of the message from him. Yet he had come now to save her.

"Mr. Welling's visit to me at the inn was merely to ascertain whether I had fulfilled the conditions of my release from the island. He jeopardized his own safety at the time to put me ashore. I am deeply grateful to him."

"But why"—Randy turned to her in helpless, baffled appeal—"why didn't you send me word? Didn't you know I was frantic about you? Do you think it was fair to treat me that way when you knew I adored you?"

"I know." She looked at him with a compassionate, impersonal glance. "I had hoped you would never find out. I wanted to be thought dead by everyone. But Mr. Sloane's peculiar ideas of responsibility in other people's affairs made it necessary for me to come here and protect myself against his insinuations. I accidentally found out something that cleared Mr. Welling of complicity in the Kirdar scandal. He warned me if I went to him with the evidence he would betray me to you."

"There is not one particle of evidence that could connect me in any way with the Kirdar affair!" Sloane asserted quietly. "Mrs. Sears is misinformed."

"Whether she is or not makes no difference," Clive interposed. "Because I have enough to smash you for life. I found everything among my father's papers, Sloane. Every proof that you were the go-between, that it was you who handled the money, and made the bargain with the Levantine group. All my father had to do was to secure financial backing for your scheme. Wait!" he exclaimed as Sloane's hand dropped to his side menacingly. "The thing is settled and out of the courts. The whole crowd of you lost out. There's nothing to be gained by exposing you now, but if you leave this room and try to plant the slightest stigma of scandal against Mrs. Sears' name or mine, I'll put you in Atlanta for twenty years. Get that straight!"

"Leave my wife's name out of this," ordered Randy. "If any man's going to defend Mrs. Sears' name I will. I'm her husband."

"Oh!" Beatrice shuddered. "I need no man's defense. Listen to me. I merely came here to tell you the truth

myself. There is no other man. I did not dream of any relief but death that night. I thought only to find my freedom easily. But now I am different, Randy. I did not come here to resume the mockery of our marriage. I am going away now—somewhere—away from everything that has hurt me in life. And I shall seek legal freedom there."

"But, darling!" protested Randy pleadingly. "I believe in you, I forgive everything."

"Do you?" She smiled back at him. "How generous! Sorry, but that does not change my plans!"

Sloane watched her narrowly, as if half expecting some relenting sign, some secret message to him, but she did not meet his eyes. Randy sank despairingly into an armchair and covered his face with his hands, his shoulders shaking with deep sobs. She smiled at him again as she passed him on her way to the bedroom to get her traveling hat and cloak. She could forgive him, now that she had delivered the final blow that freed her from him.

Clive waited against his better judgment. The affair was finished, he told himself over and over. She had successfully repudiated each and every claim the three of them had thought they had over her. Yet as she came leisurely toward the door, he asked impetuously, doggedly:

"May I—take you wherever you wish to go?"

Her gaze rested on him lingeringly, as if she wished to register forever on her memory this final impression of him.

"Thank you, no," she returned gently. It was Randy who gained her last pitying look as she passed out of the room, down the corridor, descended the wide, curving stairway, and so out into the crowded street. It was just five minutes before midnight by the round clock above the stairs, she noticed. On her

arrival that afternoon she had reserved her passage on a French liner scheduled to leave next day. Calling a taxi, she gave brief directions to the driver, and was soon in her room at the Ritz where she had planned to remain overnight.

CHAPTER XVII.

Clive waited resentfully in the small gray-and-silver salon. It was like her to keep up the tension, he told himself, even to the last moment of separation. He rose to pace up and down in the narrow space between the two doors. Fourteen months of probationary suspense had been his portion. Even after the divorce in the Parisian court, she had kept silent, refusing to reply to his letters, to see him, even to recognize him once when he had deliberately gone to Rome during the winter she had spent there.

When he had gone to Estelle she had laughed at him. Tossing Beatrice's latest letter across the table to him, she told him to read it.

It was from Paris, impetuous, restless, vivid.

I have been to Egypt for a month, seeped in desert gold. Gorgeous. Nights of rapturous longing for everything you ever starved for. Anything seems possible there, as it did on the island.

By the way, where is Clive Welling?

"That's enough for you to read." She reached for the letter. "Women are influenced by moods, and moods, my boy, are aroused or instigated, if you will, by recurrent impressions made upon our consciousness at supreme moments, old chords that vibrate, given the same keynote. It happens to be the time of year when you two lived on that island together. She is doubly freed by her divorce, and Randy's melodramatic death by his own hand. You're a fool and a coward if you don't go to her now and make her understand that you are all she wants."

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"And have her refuse to see me, possibly cut me as she did at the Borracci reception in Rome," Clive said bitterly. "I have done every earthly thing a man could do, to make amends for acting like a fool—"

"You waited for her to send for you, that's all. You'd have done better, I think, to have stayed abroad and shadowed her until she had to see you. Women like compulsion better than compromise in a case like this. She'll never forgive you, Clive, for forcing her to face the truth about Merevale, until you have mastered her. So far as a woman can, she both loves and hates you."

Nerved and irritated by the underlying sting of all she had said, Clive had left for France within a week. He had planned all manner of approaches to Beatrice, but finally discarded them all, and plunged directly to the hazard as soon as he reached Paris. Calling her hotel he had waited eagerly to hear her voice. Instead, the answer had been a request by the maid from madame that he call in person the following morning at eleven. This gave him twelve hours to cool his longing for the mere sight of her.

Now that he stood there in her suite, she still lingered behind closed doors, knowing that he was there waiting for her. He stopped short before the narrow mantel, taking in at a glance the pearl-rimmed miniature of Mary Stuart, the slender Greek vase, iridescent as an opal, incrusted with its tracery of green mold, and a crouching ivory dragon juggling a jade frog.

She had surrounded herself with trifles, he thought. She was a thousand years removed from the woman who had stepped barefooted and hesitant out of the hut that first morning, clad in his old raincoat. Luxury was apparent in every article the room contained. It might have been the threshold of—no, he smiled grimly, not Du Barry—

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Diane rather, the discriminating Diane who chose Navarre. At the sound of the opening door, he turned quickly.

Her eyes questioned him. Standing in silence, her back to the door, her hands still clasped over its glass knob, she looked at him gravely, yearningly, but with doubt. She had known that for months he had sought to make reparation, but she believed, even now, that he did not love her as she longed to be loved. She had been desired passionately by others. It was not this she asked from him. She had known her power to rouse him ever since the night on the island. But she had craved more than this, thinking he had given to Merevale the honor, the gift of his higher self.

There must be understanding, perfect comradeship, she told herself, the same ideals, all that she had missed with Randy. She had resisted the temptation to see Clive because she knew his strength. Once she had felt his arms about her again, his kiss upon her lips, she would put from her the greater demand, and be content. She shrank now, inwardly, at the fire in his eyes. Was fulfillment the end of every man's desire? And yet, her own heart seemed to stop beating at sight of him, after all these months.

Clive stared at her, his words of greeting choked by the strange appeal in her eyes, almost dread of him.

"If you want me to go away again—" he began, and stopped abruptly. "Of course, it's natural you should hate me, but—" He lost con-

trol under the strain. "Why do you look at me like that? I've stayed away as long as I could. Why won't you forgive me?"

"Probably"—she spoke hesitatingly, a little laugh between her words—"probably because all you said was so true, you know. It was—the ruse of a jealous woman. Oh, don't, please—Clive!"

She tried to release herself from his arms as they closed fast around her, to escape his lips seeking hers, but suddenly there was perfect silence in the gray salon. All Paris seemed to fade away from their vision. As she closed her eyes there came again the murmur of the sea, the swaying music of the palmettos, the flare of lightning about them, the breaking dawn after the storm.

"We'll go back there," Clive whispered to her presently. "We'll take the first boat we can catch after we're married. It's waiting for us, dear. Maybe it knew all along we'd come back."

She did not answer. He felt the pressure of her face in the hollow of his throat, her arms close about his neck.

"Love of mine, will you go with me?" he asked. There came the slightest inclination of her head in assent, but she was silent still.

Together, she thought, they would find their way back there, to the lonely little key out of the coastwise track of steamers. Perhaps it had been waiting for her that night, their port of happiness, the moonlit wake of the yacht making a gray pathway to it over the midnight sea.



THOUGHT WAVES

MY thoughts sail out like little ships
To breast the waves and rain.
And some are sunk nine fathoms deep,
And some return again.
And some may reach their destined port—
The harbor of your brain.

RAE ALLEN.

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The House of Herrick

By Winston Bouvé

Author of "Rotten Wood," "Pan Wife," etc.

IT was not because she did not want him to marry that Martin Herrick's marriage was a mortal blow to his mother. But rather because she had hoped for a good many years that he would one day bring handsome Barbara Hoyt to her as his promised wife; had contemplated yielding her place as mistress of the historical old Herrick house willingly, even gladly, to the younger woman.

The thought that Martin might never marry horrified her. She wanted to see him lose some of his detachedness, his fogyish whims. She wanted him to replace his botanical pursuits with more normal interests. And, most of all, she wanted him to have a son, who would carry on the unbroken and distinguished line of his father's house, and hers. He was thirty-two, now; it was time for him to select a wife. She impressed all this upon him in her reserved fashion, often.

But when she came home from a winter in California, to find him involved in the toils of an unknown girl who danced for her living, and on the verge of marrying her, Mrs. Herrick discarded all reserve, all dignity; these qualities, characteristics of them both, had long ago erected a barrier between them. This she beat down in a frantic effort to force him to her ground, make him see the thing he contemplated from her viewpoint.

"It's unthinkable, Martin. A common little dancer, who wears common clothes and has common friends and does common things—and that's the kindest thing

any one will say about her! You *can't* ruin your life like this. And you *can't* break my heart."

The scene took place in the library, a room where portraits of portly gentlemen and simpering dames looked down from wainscoting that had been brought from England in Colonial days. It was a room Martin had hated as a child. Not even sunlight—and that only strayed in on summer afternoons—could make it cheerful. He wondered now whether Dorinda, dancing across the polished floor like some bird of brilliant plumage, in one of her gay gowns, would enliven it, or only emphasize its stately gloom. He sighed, turned to where his mother stood, hostile and pitiful, relentless, beseeching.

"Dorinda's not what you think her, Mother," he said at last. They had gone over the same ground so many times, since he had told her of the girl. "I'm sorry you feel as you do. I don't want to hurt you—you know that—"

"Then give her up!"

There was no compromise in the erect, black-clad figure; no tenderness in the faded blue eyes, the thin mouth.

"I can't do that." Martin, loving her, knew that his mother's close-shut hands yearned to reach out to him and draw him to her; he pleaded for the last time. "You'll love her, Mother. Every one does, whether they want to or not. And you'll be glad, sooner or later, that she's my wife."

"Your wife. A dancing girl!"

Margaret Herrick glanced up at the empty space on the wall next to a por-

trait of herself, taken thirty years before, with Martin at her knee. Her son hardened. When he spoke again it was with hostility that matched her own. There was a sudden look of her about his tightened mouth.

"You must find another phrase to describe her, I'm afraid. She isn't dancing after to-night—and—she happens to be my wife!"

"You've married her already?"

"A week ago. We both foresaw—this."

Mrs. Herrick suddenly looked like a very old woman; she seemed to shrink inside of her stately black gown, to wither. She moved over to the fireplace with lagging steps, and seated herself as if she were very tired. The hand she held up to shield her face from the red glow—and from her son's eyes—trembled. Only the falling of the coals and the clock's steady tick broke the long silence. And Martin, though his throat hurt and something dimmed his vision as he looked at the bent figure, still waited, ready at a word to go. He was at the door, struggling into his top-coat, when she called to him, beckoned him to her.

"What's done is done." The face she lifted to him was worn, tracked with tears. He had never known her to weep before. "I'll do my best, Martin—if you'll bring her home."

He realized then what a surrender she had made; what he didn't realize, of course, being a man, was the difference between the hour's surrender and the unending concession that it entailed. Boyishly, in spite of his thirty-two years, his unyouthful gravity, he knelt beside his mother, put both arms about her in an awkward caress.

"She's the loveliest thing," he whispered. "Let yourself love her, because I do. Won't you?"

Mrs. Herrick, a bitter little smile on her lips, nodded. The man of it!

And two weeks later Martin brought

Dorinda home. They had spent only a few days in Bermuda, which was abloom with brides and spring lilies, on account of some greenhouse experiments Martin was making in the glass labyrinth behind the Herrick house. He was always making experiments. Dorinda, whose charming mouth was naturally curved for laughter, had begun to smile rather ruefully at his plant passion. He had evolved some rare orchids, made two or three discoveries that made fellow botanists speak and write of him with respect. But it was not an amusing hobby.

Dorinda liked amusing things; exciting things; things that had a touch of glamour about them. She was all of those things herself, you see. And when she entered the big Colonial house that was the pride of the quietly fashionable New Jersey town which had grown up about it, she wondered, with a desperate tightening of her throat, if anything amusing or exciting or glamorous had happened, within a century, inside that house.

An elderly manservant took her wrap. Her fingers had fumbled nervously at the unfastening of it, and it was with pounding pulses that she let Martin draw her up the curved stairs to the drawing-room, where his mother awaited them. He, silly fellow, thought she was a little awe-stricken at the age and dignity of the high ceilings, the paneling, the bulky, black mahogany that was their dearest possession.

He ushered her into a room as old and solemn as the square hall, and far down it, reading in the circle of lamplight, sat his mother. Dorinda, in that first panicky moment, visualized the inevitable evenings in that great room, when she would be sitting opposite an erect old woman in black, reading one of the musty books whose number lined one wall of the room. How long, she wondered as she crossed the floor, would it take to read them all?

"So this is Dorinda?"

Martin saw his mother hesitate, then offer the girl her pale, wrinkled cheek. It seemed to him that she took faintly flustered relief in the impersonalities.

"Your train must have been very late—dinner's been waiting a half hour, I'm sure."

"I'm sorry!" murmured Dorinda, for all the world like a reproved child.

And that was the home-coming. It seemed inadequate.

While he chatted of the trip Mrs. Herrick fastened her faded, keen gaze upon Dorinda. She saw a childishly slim little person whose bright dark eyes held her chief claim to beauty. She was pale—not made up, her mother-in-law noticed thankfully—but she gave no impression of colorlessness. There was a brilliance about her; her hair, for one thing, sprang up from her forehead in bright waves of a reddish hue that was full of life and light; there was a birdlike grace to every movement of her body. And when she smiled, the parting of red lips on small white teeth suggested something rare and vivid, like tropic fruit.

Mrs. Herrick was not actually conscious of all these things; she summed them up to herself as tricks of the trade—cunning artifice with which to beguile Martin, and keep him beguiled. But she did feel Dorinda's charm, and it did not lessen her hostility.

Dinner broke into the awkward hour of home-coming, and made things easier. And after the meal it was not long before the girl pleaded fatigue.

Mrs. Herrick had made ready for them the formal chamber in which General Washington had once slept. It was a mausoleum of a room, a reliquary. Dorinda, close clasped in her husband's arms, gazed over his shoulder at the canopied bed, the furnishings of a by-gone day.

She loved Martin. From the night he had been dragged, protesting, by a col-

lege friend to the restaurant where she danced twice nightly, and had sat, long after his friend had gone, waiting for her to come out in her firefly frock and dance again, she had cared. Enough to look for him the next night and the next—and when he did come again, to tuck his scrawl of a note into the top of her corsage, against her soft flesh, and hope prayerfully, as she reddened her small mouth before the mirror in her tiny dressing room, that he wasn't like all the others.

He hadn't been. And Dorinda had torn up a contract offered her by a notable manager who wanted her to dance in his newest revue, flouted her present engagement shamelessly, and proved to Martin characteristically that his austere good-looking, absent-minded self meant more to her than her light-footed, gay career.

She loved him. But it was with a somewhat desperate ardor that she clung to him now, lifting her ready lips to his. Perhaps she wanted feverishly to assure herself that he was enough; that she was happy to be here—home—with him. Home!

"Happy?" he asked, as if he read her thoughts. "Dorinda, it's wonderful—having you here! You've made everything different for me."

She disengaged herself, and peered into the mirror above an ancient toilet table, upon which her toilet things, all glittering silver and crystal, had been laid.

"There's still room for improvement. Martin, we can do it over—the house, I mean—can't we? With wicker and chintz and gay taffeta hangings?"

He stared at her in amazement.

"My dearest girl! Do it over? Why, it's as perfect a specimen of a Colonial mansion as there is in the country. It's a show place, Dorinda—each generation has kept it in character as a matter of family pride!"

"Do you think it's beautiful?" asked his wife of his reflection.

He frowned, frankly disquieted by her heresy, and tried to express what the house did mean to him.

"N-no. It's too old and dark and—well, gloomy to be beautiful, I suppose. But it's much more than that. My great-grandfather, his grandfather before him, set their mark upon this house. It's been a governor's mansion; a great general's headquarters. Big things have happened here, in this very room, Dorinda. It stands for so much, symbolizes so much—"

"The House of Herrick," she murmured absently.

Martin in a plum-colored dressing gown, looking like all his distinguished ancestors on the library wall, dropped an appreciative kiss on her head.

"Just that. There's a lot behind us, dear. We owe its heritage to the future—" He stopped, muted by the thought of his son, and Dorinda's.

"Your father," Dorinda mused, "what did *he* do?"

"Collected first editions. I'll show you his library to-morrow."

That, like Martin's botany, seemed out of keeping. And yet, Dorinda supposed, such fads served to keep the heads of the House of Herrick from wanderlust, or work that would not befit the scions of such a race.

"We're a dull lot, Dorinda. Can you put up with us, do you think?"

"I'll try." The lilt in her voice said a great deal more than that. "Oh, Martin, if only your mother likes me! I'm afraid of her, you know. She belongs here and—and I don't. It's—different."

"You *do* belong here," he told her tenderly. "Herrick House is nothing more than a frame for you, most beautiful. That's been its mission in existence all these years, I know!"

She laughed, lovely laughter that held a hint of doubt.

The weeks rolled on, but Herrick

House lost none of its austerity to the girl who had come there as mistress. For, Dorinda discovered, she was mistress, although the servants still went to Martin's mother for orders. Yet she gave back the keys the elder woman handed over to her with a simplicity that was to the manner born.

"I don't know anything about running a house," she explained. "Why, I'm in awe of the servants! I'll be much happier if you just let me go on being—company. Won't you?"

Mrs. Herrick recognized the delicate instinct prompting the girl and unbent a little. It was then that she decided to do Dorinda proper honor by giving a tea for her. It would be a lavish affair to which every one of any importance must be asked. That would be a very nice way of presenting Dorinda to her new world. And that very day she made out her list of invitations.

It puzzled the girl to discover that gratitude was expected; that his mother's plan delighted Martin. She didn't know how rarely the Herricks entertained, formally or otherwise; how secluded a life they led. For the honeymoon had barely begun to wane, and when Martin wasn't putting among his bulbs and blossoms she was radiant just to be with him. And when he was thus occupied, she amused herself by exploring the countryside in his smart roadster, with a camera. Country life still held the lure of novelty.

So the importance of the function impressed her not at all, and the day that marked her début meant little more than the opportunity to get a picture of a certain distant Jersey orchard in bridal bloom, before its evanescent beauty should fade, and the necessity of getting home early. It would never do to be late, she thought as she passed the dining room, where her mother-in-law was superintending the polishing of family plate, on her way out.

Mrs. Herrick enjoyed herself that

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day. This festive preparation reminded her of her early married life, when Herrick House had been the scene of many a brilliant gathering. And when her fingers put the finishing touches to the flowers Saunders had placed in the drawing-room—its somberness had been dispelled by the vista of lawn and terrace framed by long French windows at one end—she started upstairs in a pleasant mood. Everything would go off nicely, she felt sure, and Dorinda, in the sheer taupe gown she had promised to wear, with no touch of the theatrical—

"Where is Dorinda?" asked Martin from the hall above.

"Not in her room? But it's time for her to be dressing!" exclaimed his mother, incredulous.

But quite obviously she was not dressing, or even in the house. Consideration, reflected Mrs. Herrick a half hour later, when a servant informed her that the young madam had gone out in the roadster, was a matter of breed. How like Dorinda to flout the proper thing like this! Her resentment kindled, its heat bringing a flush to her withered cheeks.

The first guests arrived, but no Dorinda. She made inadequate explanation of her daughter-in-law's absence, placed blond Barbara Hoyt at the silver tea urn. How well she looked there, Martin's mother thought with a stifled sigh. And Martin, who had not seen her since his marriage, seemed to think so, too.

The afternoon passed off easily without Martin's bride. Her absence excited polite interest, but she was not missed. Then, suddenly, talk and tea stopped short. Mrs. Herrick turned at the expectant silence, saw Dorinda hatless, wind-blown, with an absurd smudge across her cheek, a challenging little figure in her bright-orange sports frock, framed in the window. And behind her strode an equally disheveled

young man in flannels that had once been white, but now were streaked and grimed with dust and oil.

"I got stalled," she explained gayly. "If it hadn't been for Sir Galahad here I'd still be doing penance by the roadside. We're dying for tea!"

"A friend of yours, Dorinda? What a pleasant coincidence," said Mrs. Herrick with a forced, inquiring smile.

"How absurd!" laughed Dorinda, aware of Martin's displeasure, across the room, as he waited beside the fair-haired girl pouring tea, who stared at her with the calm insolence of caste. "I don't know your name, do I? You're distinctly a friend, though!"

Mrs. Herrick caught her breath as the muddy young man, who shared her daughter-in-law's aplomb, presented himself.

"Mr. Alland," she murmured formally.

He was an artist, it seemed, and had been sketching near the scene of Dorinda's disaster. They were undoubtedly friends already. And while the correct company conjectured at their expense, they amused themselves at its expense, though only Barbara Hoyt was clever enough to realize it. Two strangers, allied in the camp of the enemy! Martin sensed the tenseness of the hour, his mother's baffled dismay. It was too bad of Dorinda. And why the deuce did she have to drag in the painter chap? Bad taste!

"Couldn't you have started back earlier?" he asked coldly, bending over her with sandwiches. He was embarrassed under Barbara's cool gaze. He hated to have Dorinda lay herself open to amused talk, raised eyebrows.

Dorinda got the reproof, but hid the hurt it dealt her. So it was she and gay young Alland matched against them all, even Martin, was it? She ignored him while she chose a cigarette from Alland's case, and let him light it. Peo-

ple didn't smoke in Mrs. Herrick's drawing-room.

"Why?" she drawled. "Oh, yes, the tea—"

"Given for you."

Mirth touched her lips as she looked about the crowded room. That was ironic. She answered him with her eyes on Alland, who plainly thought her delightful.

"Wasn't my tale of a breakdown plausible? Of course, if you'd rather have the truth—I didn't start earlier because—I didn't want to!"

Some one began to chatter inconsequentially. Martin straightened, returned to his place beside Barbara Hoyt, and did not look toward his wife again.

A quarrel would have cleared the atmosphere after the tea. When the last guest had gone Dorinda, knowing she had disgraced herself, waited for the inevitable scene. But nothing happened. If Mrs. Herrick had reproached her for her courtesy to the company, if Martin had vented his irritation, she would have defended herself hotly, made them see, perhaps, the injustice of their disapproval. And then—for she was a warm, impulsive creature—she would have been sorry, would have generously admitted herself to be wrong, and conciliated them both with tearful, tender caresses.

Unfortunately, the Herricks never quarreled. They ignored what displeased them, never mentioned an unpleasantness. Where there had been a misunderstanding, there must remain an ever-widening breach. That reserve had been responsible for many a family tragedy.

A subdued Dorinda guessed its import after dinner, when she found herself alone with Martin.

"You're cross!" she said faintly, resembling a charming and penitent child as she knelt before the shelves of books. "I'm sorry, Martin!"

He was silent. It had come upon him suddenly what an alien Dorinda was. Or was it he who was the stranger? Had he forgotten her language? He was trying to find adequate expression of this when she spoke again.

"You don't like Phil Alland—is that it?"

Her tone jarred upon him. She seemed to have no conception of what he was striving to say; to be deliberately baiting him. And Alland he didn't like. He thought the fellow impudent, underbred, Bohemian.

"No," he said at length. "It isn't Alland. I don't like him, but that has little enough to do with it. It's—oh, it can't be explained! If you don't understand—"

"I do. You think I was rude to all those deadly people you and your mother had here." She kept her eyes on the book. "They are deadly, Martin. Stuffy! But I couldn't help being late, and when I did come, they were beastly rude to me!" Her voice quivered passionately.

He rose, fearing a scene, and looked down at her. The lamplight cast queer planes of shadow upon him, turned him into a living replica of the old portrait behind him, the portrait of a stern-eyed judge.

"We won't discuss it, I think. But I must ask you hereafter to extend conventional courtesy, at least, to any friends of ours who call on you. I'm sorry if you find them so deadly, but out of deference to my mother, I must ask you to conceal your boredom."

His mother. She said something bitter that he did not trouble to answer, and when she looked up, the tears still streaming down her cheeks, he was gone.

That night she lay wide-eyed, motionless, long after Martin's easy breathing told her that he slept. It was as if a stranger lay beside her, a stranger

whom she could not even reach. How had it happened? A childish incivility on her part, a few words, and they were no longer lovers. And without love, what would make her life here endurable? But love itself wasn't enough. If it had been, Martin's mother, who embodied all the things that made up Martin's life, couldn't have come between them like this.

A clock downstairs chimed twice. Two months ago, at this whimsical hour, she would have been flashing across the marble dance floor of Rigi's; white-limbed, swathed in iridescent scarlet stuff that clung to her like a flame. She flung one arm across her eyes, envisioned the club dansant, its black-and-gold splendor, against which white shoulders and flawless backs shone like pearl under the cunning lights; the music, beaten out in throbbing, pagan strain, still rang in her ears.

The floor would be crowded now; Louis, sleekest of head waiters, would be insinuating late comers toward the few and undesirable tables that had not been reserved. Laughter running high; the clink of silver and china and glass; glasses filled and refilled from flat silver flasks—libation to the great god, Jazz.

And friends! They didn't seem so shoddy to her now, as she remembered them, pictured them in their hurried, glittering gayeties. Tommy Duveen, who was ready to marry her whenever she would, silly and good-natured and usually drunk; beautiful, black-eyed Pezet, who danced with her professionally, and made mad Latin love to her afterward, blond Bonny Grey, who tore off the peacock feathers and the handful of jeweled gauze she wore, as soon as the last curtain fell upon a certain popular revue, to don a cheap serge frock and hurry home to an ailing baby. She missed them, and wanted it all desperately. For that was living, even though the dawn, shut out by velvet

hangings that were drawn across the windows before the stars began to pale, would tarnish the tinsel, turn lights and loveliness garish and wan.

She was surprised to feel the pillow damp beneath her cheek. She might as well cry for the moon, unless— She raised herself on one elbow, and looked down at her husband. Martin, asleep, his head pillow'd boyishly on his arm, wore no look of severity. His sensitive mouth curved, as if he were about to smile. He looked startlingly young and appealing—the Martin who had watched her dance, and loved her for her grace and colorful charm and aliveness—not the Martin who was trying to mold her into an imperfect replica of his mother, and all the prim, placid mistresses of Herrick House who had ruled there before her. No, she loved him; she could not leave him for her old life, could not forget him.

Their months together had been more than an episode. She was no longer just Dorinda Deane, dancing girl at Rigi's, but part of him, her husband. She couldn't wrench away now. The complexity of human desires! Somehow, she'd have to evolve happiness for herself and Martin out of the muddle. If she could find one friend, one link to her gay, carefree days, she thought she could endure this life of Martin's, for Martin's sake. But this loneliness, with no one who understood—

Drowsily, she remembered the laughing, intimate look in Alland's gray eyes as they met hers, when all the frumpy, proper people had been shocked silent by their casual entrance. He did understand. And then she fell asleep, to dream absurdly of his rescuing her from all the portraits on the library wall, that had come alive, and jumped out of their frames.

It was three days later that Alland appeared unexpectedly before her as she sat on a curved cement bench idly watching gayly colored motor cars flash past.

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"Where is the gorgon?" he inquired.
"Napping." Dorinda giggled. She liked his impudence.

They spent a gay hour together. Alland, who knew women, or thought he did, watched the strained look leave her rebellious, pretty mouth, and the shadow vanish from her dark eyes. What a vivid little thing she was, beyond the repression of her husband, and his chilly-fingered mother! As she sparkled for him, he tried to remember where he had seen that brilliance of hers before. For somewhere, some time, he had glimpsed her. Perhaps in a crowd, or only on the street.

"Where have I met you, or seen you, before last Tuesday?" he puzzled aloud.

Dorinda shrugged. She was having a heavenly time.

"You've seen me dance, perhaps, at Rigi's. Or in the 'Blue Idol.'" She hummed a strain from the score of the operetta.

Alland leaned forward eagerly.

"You're Dorinda Deane!"

"I—used to be." There was a note of pathos in her laugh.

Alland had seen her dance once, and he told her extravagantly how exquisite she and her dancing were.

"I've been mad to paint you ever since. If you'd let me—"

Dorinda drank deep of his admiration. She liked to feel his beauty-loving eyes upon her when she moved, dryadlike in her green gown. She hungered for some one's approval. Even Martin, these days, seemed to look upon her through his mother's eyes. Only that morning he had frowned as she slipped into a cloth-of-silver frock that had just come from her modiste. "Too stagey," had been his comment. And he didn't like coral-colored beads in place of an adequate back. If she wore that in Torrington— Why, Dorinda had inquired, was one given a perfect back if not to display it?

"I'm mad to be painted," she assured

Alland now. "A portrait's the outward and visible sign of inward, invisible approbation on some one's part."

That wistful ring again! It stirred Alland as even her loveliness couldn't. And before he left—he didn't leave until Martin came out and joined them—she had promised to come in to his New York studio one day a week, to pose.

She meant to tell Martin that night at dinner about the portrait. But Barbara Hoyt dined with them, a Norse goddess in blue that matched her eyes, and she dominated the talk as she dominated the eye. And after dinner, Dorinda, bored to tears, was left with her mother-in-law while Martin took Barbara out to the greenhouses to show her his newest experiment. She wanted to scream when Mrs. Herrick surveyed the silver gown—she had put it on in a defiant mood—through the lorgnon that dangled, with other jingling little ornaments, below her waist.

"Your gown, Dorinda, is hardly suitable for Torrington. Is it one you had before your marriage?"

"No," Dorinda stifled a yawn. "It came to-day. I like it."

Words, tedious, disapproving. A silence even more tedious, and then Barbara and Martin. Barbara was on committees, and they talked about them. At last she had to go, and Martin escorted her home. When he got back Dorinda was unhooking the dress he disliked. She looked beautiful and brave and gay to him, standing there, the only bright thing in the great, somber room. And a little pathetic, too, as she stepped out of the silver sheath. He took her in his arms; drew her silky head against his heart.

"Don't wear it again," he begged. "You're beautiful in it—but I feel as though I'm sharing you with every one who sees you. It flaunts you. Discard it, dearest, for my sake. Won't you?"

That was the sort of thing Dorinda couldn't fight. When Martin pleaded

with her, his lips against her cheek, he always won. She pushed the little heap of brocade aside with one slippers foot, watched it glisten vainly on the floor. And then she recovered it, folded it into its box, which lay open on the bed. It was a lovely thing, and she knew it was perfect on her. She'd send it to Alland's studio, with a tiny note. He could paint her in it.

"Selling it back!" Martin took for granted joyously. "Buy a dozen new ones, if you like."

He was generous to her. Her bank book, her mesh bag stuffed with bills, the pearls around her neck, all testified to that. But those were all things he wanted her to have. When it came to something she wanted—

She didn't mention the prospective portrait, after all.

A few weeks later Phil Alland, who had fallen into the habit of calling often at Herrick House, went back to New York, and not long after that she began to pose for him.

She loved those weekly afternoons in his studio. Amusing people were apt to drop in; Alland, who had dancing, sun-flecked eyes and a flair for pretty women who knew how to play with him, gave her an amazing zest for life. She flirted with him extravagantly, sure of herself and him, and always took the five-o'clock train, which got her home in time to dress for dinner. It wasn't so hard, the rest of the week, to adapt herself to the dullness of Herrick House, even though Martin was absorbed now in a long treatise on his precious botanical finds, and his mother was more caustic than ever.

As time went on she realized that she and Martin must be left alone together if their marriage was to succeed. His mother came between them at every turn. What made it difficult was that old Mrs. Herrick was not the chatelaine. If Herrick House, and even some of the property, had been hers, Martin and

his wife could have struck out for themselves. But everything was Martin's, and Dorinda would not have dreamed of suggesting that his mother find another home.

So she tried to make the situation bearable by yielding every point, guarding herself from any temperish outburst, and seeking solace in agreeable young Alland when things got too bad.

By August the portrait neared its finish. And one sultry afternoon Philip told her that two more sittings would complete it. Their gaiety was banished by the thought. Philip, frowning, drank in her beauty with grave eyes.

"I've loved being painted." Dorinda looked about the shabby room, then moved over to the open window, below which, far down, lay ancient Stuyvesant Square, dusty green this midsummer day. Framed against the light, her silver gown sparkling in it, she looked at him over her shoulder.

"I've been happy here."

"I've been happy having you here."

Philip, to whom the portrait, a charming thing, seemed suddenly very paltry, joined her at the window. He found himself unable to pick up his cues. His pulses raced at her nearness. And Dorinda found herself caught suddenly in an embrace that expressed her priceless perfection as his tumbling words tried to do.

To be perfect in some one's eyes! While he poured out his ardor she listened, fascinated in spite of herself. But when his lips sought hers she broke away, hating him and herself.

"I don't love you!" she cried. "It's been beastly of me to play like this—I ought to have known better! It's Martin, Phil—not you!"

She told him tremulously of her dull life in Torrington, of her mother-in-law's dislike, Martin's absorption in his work; things he had guessed long ago, but that he had never heard from her

lips before. For Dorinda was sporting; she held her head high, and never played the pathetic. And then she told him how utterly it was Martin—and not himself—that she cared for. Alland was sporting, too. And, besides, he loved her.

"I shouldn't be surprised," he observed, "if it's the silver gown and your delightful shoulders and the curve of your brows that have brought me to my knees. You might start tea while I recover my balance and wash up!"

"Hurry, then," laughed Dorinda shakily, loving him for his spirit, "I have a train to make."

But she didn't make that train, or the next, which left Penn Station at seven, because the hazy afternoon was darkened by thunderclouds that rolled up murkily from the west, and presently the rain came down in torrents. Thunder, which always terrified Dorinda, cannonaded the skies, and lightning flashed vividly now and then. A high wind joined forces with the storm, and chaos was complete.

It lasted two hours—just too long for Dorinda to make her train, and, knowing she had missed it, she tried to reach Martin by phone. After twenty minutes central told her that part of Torrington would be without telephone service for twenty-four hours. A telephone pole had been hit and its lines were dead.

"Blessed storm!" quoth Alland. "We'll dine and dance somewhere. You can take the theater train back."

Dorinda, knowing she shouldn't, acquiesced. It had been so long—so long—since she had tasted that sort of thing. She was greedy for it.

"Rigi's!" she begged.

It was an unfortunate choice. For when she paused on the threshold of that famous restaurant she was hailed by Louis, the head waiter, by a handful of habitual diners there, who knew her, by Rigi himself. Radiantly, she greeted

them all. It was like coming home. And, when one has been away from home a long time, and has just come back, it isn't easy to tear one's self away again.

Alland shared her generously. He could afford to, for he was much closer to Dorinda Deane than he ever could be to Martin Herrick's wife. He fitted into this scheme of things. And to-night, it was Dorinda Deane who danced once more at Rigi's. The little Italian implored, and though she had drawn on her gloves, and pulled her furred wrap about her shoulders, when the music she knew so well commenced, at a sign from Rigi, she tore off her gloves, let her wrap fall.

Once more she dipped and swayed against the black and gold of the crowded room. Once more she danced; lyric grace embodied in beauty. Midnight struck as she was swung upon a table by riotous friends of her dancing days, and was pelted with flowers from the flower girl's tray. Forgotten were trains! And later on, she danced again. Alland, more artist than lover, watched her breathlessly, sketched tiny figures all over his menu card. Dorinda, in gold tissue, against an Oriental set; Dorinda, in one of the temple dances of Siam—

Not till waiters hurried to draw velvet curtains across the windows—strange symbol of dawn!—did Dorinda remember time again. Flushed, radiant, exquisitely alive, she started up.

"I'm Cinderella!" she cried. "I've got to go now, or my grandeur'll turn to rags."

Together, she and Alland made their way out—a difficult way, for Dorinda's return had made carnival at Rigi's. A taxi rushed them to the station, and alone, for she would not permit Philip to accompany her, she boarded the rumbling, often-stopping milk train.

Early, six o'clock sunlight splashed the station platform when she got out

of the day coach at last, stiff and sleepy and dreading her reception at Herrick House. There was no machine, of course, and Dorinda plodded wearily along the silent streets. Tired as she was, she had to smile at the absurdity of her home-coming.

How grim the old house looked as she ascended the porch steps! Like a panicky child, she hesitated long before inserting her key in the door. And then, as she stood there, wondering if she could slip in unseen, by some lucky chance, the door was flung open, and Martin, still in his dinner clothes, pallid, rumpled and unmistakably fierce, greeted her. His mother, witchlike, Dorinda thought, in her black gown, a little disheveled too, hovered behind him.

"In God's name, where have you been?" he flung at her.

Ashen above her dark wrap, with a queer little tightening of her throat, Dorinda told them. He'd be furious, of course. Oh, if he'd only understand!

Her mother-in-law gasped audibly in her incredulity.

Dorinda unfastened her cape—the fur seemed to be choking her—stood aghast at the suspicion written large upon their distorted faces, the sunlight raying through the half-open door, splashing her silver gown. It hadn't occurred to her that they might doubt her word. That dazed her. She turned from one to the other. Martin, with a groan, flung himself into a thin black chair, buried his face in his arm, upon the hall table.

"You think—"

"What people do think, when things like this happen!" Mrs. Herrick's whisper was more terrible than strident speech. "You—to have done this to Martin—to all of us! That you should have brought shame upon our honorable name—dragged it in the mud—"

It was terrible. But Dorinda heard

her out, listening dully to her arrogant, bitter complaint. There was more to her subdued violence than mother love, hurt to the quick. There was the class hatred of generations, meted out to an interloper who had brought ruin upon an old house. The girl suddenly understood. She wasn't defending herself from one embittered old woman, but from a long, proud race. And her defense was a futile thing.

"I see," she said at last, quite gently. "There's nothing to say, is there? It isn't last night you're thinking of, most. It's that Martin should have ever brought me here. It's a terrible thing, this House of Herrick. It's a Moloch, demanding all you've got of the real things, and giving you—only this!"

Her gesture included the great hall, the faded grandeur of the drawing-room beyond, where Herricks of another day looked down upon the old order of things.

"I hate it, hate it, for what it's done to you all! If I had a son—" Her voice broke, she turned to her husband, whose face was still hidden. So he, too, thought her guilty.

"I'm going, Martin. This is—good-by."

A sob wrenched his bent shoulders. It was his mother who spoke again.

"Go? Now, when it would mean open disgrace to all of us? Oh, but—you can't—Dorinda—"

But the girl fled, nevertheless. The door banged shut behind her, stilling Martin's cry. And down the graveled walk, down the quiet street she ran, with only a housemaid sweeping some sun-splashed porch to watch her flight.

Broadway, in theater flux; brilliant, dazzling, dazing to one who had long been away from its nightly glory. The man who had been sleeping under tropic skies and their hot, white stars found this firmament of light confusing. But, engulfed in the human tide, he let him-

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self be borne on. He scanned each pretty, powdered face that drifted by, as if beneath some drooping, feathered hat he might find what he sought. Slow-moving machines rolling theater-ward, whose occupants he could only glimpse, intrigued his interest. And yet his quest seemed idle enough, for, finding himself shoved into line before a theater ticket window, he thrust in his money, purchased a ticket for a performance whose very name he did not know.

The curtain had gone up when he was shown to his seat—a good one, by chance—and left to yawn through the first act of a musical extravaganza. He did not even look at his program until the second scene—a Siamese temple set that, he knew, was as perfect as it was decorative. Then he stooped to recover it from the floor to see who had designed the scenes, and, as he fished about under his seat, a storm of hand-clapping announced the entrance of some favorite.

He looked up. Down the black-marble steps swayed a temple dancer, lithe, perfect-limbed, clad, it seemed to him, in golden scales. He did not see her face at first, for her head was flung back so that her fantastic, sweeping headdress rayed out behind her, fan-shaped. Then, on tiptoe, she straightened slowly, smiled upon the rocking house.

It was Dorinda.

Herrick's hand trembled upon the program, crumpled it to nothing. Dorinda! Vaguely, he had expected to find her under the dazzling lights she loved. But it was strange to think her name was flashing outside among them, as it doubtless was. His quest had not been hard. He leaned forward, watched the curtain fall upon that golden grace, watched it rise again and again. Still in a daze, he encored her with the others.

He had not seen her since the fright-

ful morning of her return to, and departure from Herrick House, two years before. Then the debacle had seemed complete. But not as complete as it seemed later, when, after his mother's sudden death, he had joined a company of distinguished botanists who were seeking certain orchidaceous specimens in African swamp lands. Ten months they had trekked through jungle trails, risked life and limb, lain parched with jungle fever—for the sake of a single flower—diabolical bloom, blood-stained and dark, which, poisonous as it was, might have been begotten from some evil spell.

Those had been hideous months; not the discomfort—for that usually attends adventure—but the loneliness had made them hideous. For in waste spaces, one thinks. And Herrick had thought, unceasingly. In particular, of the girl who had been his wife. He thought so much about her that when his comrades sailed for home he did not accompany them, but lingered in Gibraltar, where the bustling tourist life seemed to help dim her memory, and nothing reminded him of her.

But restlessness had possessed him. He wandered through Spain, spent a winter on the Riviera, a summer in the Alps. And now, home again, on his first night in New York, he had come upon her like this.

When the curtain fell upon the second act he stumbled up the aisle, and asked an usher to direct him to the stage door.

"Mrs. Herrick," he told the pink-shirted gentleman who lounged before it, then smiled grimly at the man's stare. "Miss Deane. Where is her dressing room?"

A crumpled bill persuaded the fellow, and Martin, led past the mysterious recesses behind the stage, found himself knocking on her door. "Come in," called a well-remembered voice.

He turned the knob.

She saw him first in the mirror; the powder puff slipped through her fingers, the tiny lamp on which black grease for her brows and lashes was melting burned on. At last she gestured the maid, who was hooking her costume, to leave them.

"Why are you here?" she demanded, bright-eyed, hard, hostile.

Martin tried to find beneath the grease paint and the enamel the Dorinda he knew. She was beautiful, brilliant, as she used to be, but with an additional hardness. She glittered now, like the golden scales that covered her, the jewels in her plumed headdress. He wanted to see her tender and gay once more. To remember her that way.

"Chance. I bought a ticket, took my seat—and you danced on. Then I had to see you—talk to you—"

"There's nothing to be said, is there?"

Martin shrugged, a weary, baffled little gesture. After all, what was there to say to this glittering creature whose very voice was strange? Had he been grieving for a dream? A bell shrilled, and he knew desperately that he could not leave her like this. Somewhere, under those scales, those gleaming baubles and artifices, was the Dorinda of old. He had to find her!

"Yes!" His voice rang out as some one knocked. "Dorinda, I—"

"Wait here!" she commanded, catching up a length of gauze, and flying to the door. "I only go on for ten minutes."

He heard faint music, far-off applause, but the ten minutes spun out interminably. At last she returned, and he waited while behind the screen she tore off her garb and removed part of her make-up. It was a slow process, for people kept coming in. Her publicity man, the manager, an usher with flowers which she tossed aside contemptuously. And then, while she pulled a little velvet hat low upon her hair, the maid said:

"Mr. Alland, with the third-act sketches."

Martin jumped to his feet. It was still Alland, was it? Why the devil should he, Martin, be sitting here? And why, more particularly, should he be yearning to thrash another man who came to a dancer's dressing room?

"I can't look at them to-night. Tell him to come with them in the morning." Then, ready, in a dark fur wrap that snuggled up about her chin, she turned.

"We can't talk here. Will you come to my apartment for a few minutes?"

They were both silent in the cab. It drew up presently before an old-fashioned brick apartment building facing Central Park, and he followed her into the elevator. It gave him a queer little thrill when the man addressed her as Mr. Herrick.

"You keep your—married name?" he murmured as she unlocked the door.

"Oh, yes. It's better—" She stopped short, snapped on the lights in the pleasant living room. He looked about him curiously. It was a charming room, a gay room, that suited her perfectly—or would have suited the old Dorinda. She smiled faintly as his gaze roved about, took in the low bookcases, the gay cushions, the chintz-framed windows that, by day, must overlook the Park.

He expressed his appreciation of the charming setting.

"I told you once I had a chintz soul. Well—" She had removed her hat and the light gleamed on her russet hair as she bent over a console table on which stood a lamp and a bowl of yellow flowers. These she fingered gently. "There's something, of course, that you have to say. I think I know. You want a divorce. It could have been arranged—but I haven't known where to reach you."

"Alland will marry you," said Martin. "It still is Alland!"

"Alland has designed the sets of two

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productions in which I danced. That's all. He's a friend, I suppose. He never was more than that."

And as she looked at him, he knew that she spoke the truth.

"If you'd believed me, Martin, and not your suspicions——"

Her voice held a haunting regret for his having failed her. And though its pathos hurt him terribly, it roused a deathless hope in his breast.

"If I had the chance again—is there some one else, Dorinda?"

She shook her head.

"There's no one. Not even you, Martin, now. I'm sorry—but when you let me go, without a word——"

"You want me to leave you!" Martin picked up his hat. "You spoke of a divorce. You'd rather not be tied to me, of course. I don't blame you. Whenever you want it——"

"Wait!" she cried, for the second time that night. She turned, and came toward him impulsively. "You're lonely, Martin—I hadn't thought of that. I've cheated you, all this time——"

Slimly silhouetted against the dark portières, her fingers entwined in a tassel, she smiled at him.

"You've a son, Martin, whom you've been cheated out of. I'll bring him to you."

"A son!" he echoed, blinking at her, as she vanished. Impossible!

But it wasn't. For she came back burdened with a sleeping child, whose diminutive profile was so like his own as to be almost funny. He was a warm, pink, sleeping baby, and yet he was precisely like the portrait of a certain be-wigged judge that hung in the Herrick library, and like the big man who hung over him.

"I had a right to keep him all to myself. He was mine!" Deftly, she laid the child upon the Chesterfield, adjusted the lamp shade so that no light would fall upon the rose-leaf face. Martin, shy-fingered, touched his son's cheek.

"Is he always as warm as this?" Martin didn't notice her defiance.

Dorinda no longer hard or cold, nothing but mother now, knelt beside the pink bundle.

"Good heavens, Martin, you don't think he has any fever! He did have a little cold this morning——" She looked up at her husband imploringly. And as if a year or more of paternity actually did lie behind him, he comforted her.

"Nonsense! See how easily he's sleeping. My dear girl, you mustn't!"

He broke off, confused, embarrassed, but she didn't seem to notice. Neither did she notice that his arm lay lightly about her shoulders as she knelt there beside him and the child. She reached up, stroked his hand absently—an old trick of hers. And then, without knowing how it happened, they found themselves in each other's arms.

"To think of all I've missed!" said Martin some time later. "Dorinda—you'll have to devote the rest of your life to making it up to me!"

She leaned her russet head upon his shoulder as if she were very tired.

"I will!" There was a lilt in her voice. "Oh, Martin, we've missed you, too. But it was the only way. I didn't want him to grow up in the shadow of—the House of Herrick; with false values, false ideals. It's a terrible thing, this living up to one's past!"

She wanted him to understand, and not be hurt.

"If my son grows up to his mother, dear——" Martin murmured, his lips against her cheek. "What, by the way, is his name?"

She disengaged herself.

"Why, Martin! Henry Garland Herrick, after his great-grandfather, the judge. He's the image of that portrait of him in the library!"

And Martin laughed like a happy boy.

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The Finished Product



By Arthur Tuckerman

Author of "Breath of Life," etc.

A DEBUTANTE, flippant and bobbed-haired, who had a knack of sizing up her friends with some accuracy, once referred to young Maclean Wright as the "Finished Product"—the perfectly blended and balanced result of four leisurely years at an ivy-walled, Eastern university, a generous allowance, and a careless, but fundamentally correct upbringing by Knickerbocker parents who were comfortably secure both as to income and position.

To a casual observer, unable to penetrate the veneer of mingled flippancy and reserve which he was wont to assume among strangers, he might well have appeared as a kind of imitation man, a neatly clad shell, a dancing puppet. Yet, to those who knew him well he occasionally revealed an inherent greatness of heart and spirit that was wholly worth while. Those who moved in the same unhurried stratum as he and enjoyed the same easy privileges, claimed that this basic virtue was due to his upbringing; others caustically asserted that the virtue existed in spite of his surroundings, not on account of them. But this, of course, is merely a time-old question to be forever argued concerning the Maclean Wrights of this world.

On an August morning about nine o'clock Maclean Wright appeared at the door of the Northern Maine Limited's sweltering, swaying dining car, glanced anxiously down the row of coatless, perspiring breakfasters, then made his

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way with leisurely determination toward the only vacant seat in the car. The table happened to be for two, and as he took his seat he made a hurried, yet discreet survey of the girl opposite him. She appeared, at the moment, at a humorous disadvantage, since she was engaged in wiping delicately from her cheek the spray of a recalcitrant grapefruit, blinking absurdly, looking patiently annoyed at the world in general.

She was rather a nice-looking girl, Maclean concluded, and tried immediately, as was his unconscious habit, to conjure up in his mind some vague picture of the usual tenor of her existence. It was not easy this time. Her clothes—the trim, dark serge suit, the small hat of soft straw—were not exactly smart, merely neat. Certainly, there was no ostentation about her. Her brown hair was carefully, yet unfashionably done; her eyes candid and blue; her features irregular, yet somehow attractive.

Just an ordinary, nice, freckle-faced girl, he decided—from some middle-sized New England town with elm-shaded streets, wide and dusty sidewalks, and stolid old houses painted white. He imagined that she attended church meetings with some regularity; was, perhaps, the office assistant of the town's rising young lawyer.

An Ethiopian appeared beside the table, perilously balancing a heavy tray. The girl dug her spoon tentatively in the grapefruit before her; it slithered across the plate. Maclean was in-

stantly aware of a moist trickle upon his left cheek.

"Oh! I'm dreadfully sorry!" the girl cried, and actually blushed crimson. This at once interested him; he had come lately to look upon the feminine blush as a peculiar device existing solely in the brains of a few novelists who remained sentimental in an age of stark realism.

"Grapefruit," he remarked politely, "is liable to misbehave in the most expert hands."

Silence—until the girl asked him gently if he would mind having the window open; there was a wire screen; the cinders wouldn't come in— He opened the window, permitted his casual consideration of her to proceed. Here, he told himself, we have the young American ingénue—not the pampered pet of the ballroom, but the genuine, small-town ingénue, who causes a flutter in the hearts of the American House loafers as she sails down Main Street in her battered Ford; who leads a wholly virtuous, but none too thrilling existence, an existence whose dullness is only mitigated by such high lights as the Town Hall Ball, the County Fair, and Commemoration Day at the local high school. That she had written the prize-winning essay on Patriotism, he felt sure.

"I hope to goodness," the girl observed suddenly, "that it will be cooler than this at Pine Bay."

Maclean gave a little start of surprise. He, of course, was bound for Pine Bay—indeed, so much must have been evident to the rest of the passengers from his altogether correct gray-green golfing tweeds, the fuzzy stockings, and low-heeled brogues of Norwegian grain. But, somehow, he couldn't visualize the girl in the smart Pine Bay setting.

"Pine Bay," he told her, "is the coolest place on the coast—atmospherically and otherwise. I've often been there before. You staying up there long?"

She seemed pleasingly confused at his interest.

"Only for a week with some friends—the Wentworths. Do you happen to know them?"

This time he was frankly astounded. He, of course, was going to the Wentworths'. But she— At this instant the Ethiopian returned, bringing coffee and congealed eggs which momentarily claimed his attention.

"I'm going to Ella's, too," he said, buttering a cube of corn bread. "Know any of the crowd she's asked?"

She shook her head.

"Only by name, except Ella. She's a cousin of mine. I heard, though, that Leila Trevor is going to be there—the New York society girl, you know."

He winced inwardly, but gallantly concealed any visible manifestation. To him, the term was suggestive of cheap movie subtitles, or the Sunday sections of certain florid newspapers. It stamped his companion—he admitted the fact regretfully—as remote, different. There was no conscious snobbishness in his reasoning; merely a conviction that they were—well, poles apart.

"I know Leila," he informed her without enthusiasm. "She's already up there, with her brother Boyce. There'll be about eight altogether in the party, I guess. Some from New York, some from Boston, and perhaps a Philadelphian or two. Ella's cosmopolitan." He added modestly enough: "My name's Maclean Wright. Maybe Ella's mentioned me—as an old friend. Ella is one of those rare girls with whom one can satisfactorily remain old friends after the first mutual exhilaration has subsided."

She gazed at him abstractedly, without replying; seemed frankly to be summing up his round, ruddy, boyish face, the crisp fair hair very definitely parted, his air of complacent, yet not at all aggressive assurance. Whether she approved of him he could not tell;

he rather wanted to know. She was a girl, he concluded, who effectually concealed any clews to her mental processes or emotions—if she had any emotions. Here was a new subject for speculation and, later perhaps, experiment.

They finished breakfast at the same time—was it coincidence?—and strolled out of the dining car together. They passed by a smoking compartment where a stout drummer in startling, mauve-silk shirt sleeves was discoursing upon “increased production” to another drummer in equally startling, orange-silk shirt sleeves.

“Good heavens!” said Maclean. “Increased production—on a morning like this! We ought to scratch out ‘E pluribus unum’ from beneath that aggressive national bird of ours, and substitute ‘Increased Production.’”

She smiled faintly, he observed—whether in derision or assent he wasn’t sure. That was the interesting thing about her. Most smiles were so readable.

“It’s a state of mind,” he rambled on, assisting her through a swaying vestibule, “like stucco houses in suburbs, and buying every McCormack record that’s issued for the parlor Victrola—and reading pamphlets on efficiency.”

“And movies?” she suggested.

He shook his head doubtfully.

“N-no. It doesn’t do to sneer at them. Did you see Griffith’s latest?”

Here, at least, was a mutual bond between New York and Kinghampton. Kinghampton, she had informed him, was the name of the town with the elm-shaded avenues and demure white houses. They took seats on the observation platform, listened to the pleasant, clicking hum of the rails, watched fantastic horses and wagons moving eerily over grade crossings, as gates swung upward in clouds of swirling dust.

He offered her a cigarette, which she

refused without any display of confusion—thus rising in his estimation.

At the Pine Bay station—a shingle building with black signs, gold-lettered, indicating mileage to Boston and Montreal—there was a sports-model motor to meet them, handled by a swart Italian chauffeur. It was a dark-blue vehicle with lemon-colored wheels—long, low, vibrating softly—a piquant contrast to the canopied hacks with negro drivers and lean horses with busy, fly-whisking tails. Maclean instantly approved. It confirmed his previous opinion of the Wentworths’ good taste, striking as it did the happy medium between the somber, undistinguished, nation-wide car of moderate price and the blatancy of the profiteer’s silver-and-aluminum importation.

The girl beside him relapsed into silence. He decided, quite dispassionately, that she wouldn’t stand the test; that as an informal companion on the train she was all that could be expected, but that he would turn his attention in some other direction as soon as he had sized up the crowd Ella had invited. This, he felt, was wholly within his rights.

Her voice came drifting into his thoughts, indulging in some casual comment about the placid, mirrorlike stretch of sea that margined the curving whiteness of the road. They swung round a corner, passed a gayly striped lighthouse, a stretch of fantastic red rocks; heard distant peals of laughter from a shingle golf club across a waving field of daisies.

Eventually, they veered sharply between two white pillars, and drew up before the familiar, columned portico of the trim brick house. Ella Wentworth was on the steps to greet them, and he approved of her cool, apple-green dress, white shoes and stockings, hatless golden head gleaming in the morning sunshine. Ella was substantial without being fat, good-natured, de-

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pendable. You knew instinctively that she would always be decent to you, if you were decent to her. That kind. She welcomed them cordially enough, yet was preoccupied. She invariably worked herself into a high state of excitement over her house parties.

"Hello, Mary dear. Hello, Mac. I'm terribly glad to see you again. Goodness, aren't you tired after that *dreadful* journey? Just *imagine* being in a train on a day like this! Trains are positive crimes—some day we'll all travel by aero-plane. The rest are all down at the tennis courts. Leave your bags here, Mac, and Dawson will take them up. Oh, of course, you want to go up to your room and powder your nose, Mary! How silly of me! When you're ready, Mac, meet me here, and we'll go down to the courts."

When Ella rejoined him a quarter of an hour later they strolled through a shady arbor to the tennis courts, where Maclean encountered the other members of the party. He knew them all—Boyce Trevor, Harry Larkin, Spencer Malcolm, all of them confirmed and reliable week-enders. The two girls, Leila Trevor and Patty Merril; Leila the same as ever, alabaster white of complexion, raven hair, liquid violet eyes—Leila, who had caused more waves of emotion in the stag line than any other girl of her time.

Miss Leila's charm was greatly due to her own cleverness, because she rarely spoke except with her eyes—spoke to all men, from the most callow freshman to the tallest, gravest business man, in the same way. She was a girl who pinned all her faith, and rightly too, on her appearance. And Patty Merril, plump, vivacious blonde, her straw-colored, bobbed hair carefully combed out; infantile, pink-and-white face; wide, credulous brown eyes. Unlike Leila she talked a great deal, and said nothing; was always bubbling over with a tireless, but tiresome, ardor.

For some minutes Maclean chatted in a desultory fashion with Patty, then, hearing her utter a half-suppressed giggle and following the direction of her gaze, he saw the girl he had met on the train progressing slowly down the arbor toward them. She had changed her dress, and was wearing a creation of pink gingham, with a salient, floating, butterfly bow at the back. This, he felt, recovering from his surprise, was an accurate indorsement of all his speculations concerning her. Pink gingham at a house party!

Ella introduced her—Mary Croft was her name—to every one.

"Be nice to her, Mac," she whispered. "She's a little cousin of mine."

He studied the girl again, furtively. She was already laughing, animated, her cheeks genuinely pink. Boyce Trevor was talking to her. He was patently polite—and very nearly patronizing. For the second time it occurred to Maclean that there was something excessively prim and old-fashioned about the way she did her hair.

He determined that "The Gingham"—he had mentally dubbed her thus—wasn't going to bother him *at all*. He found himself wondering whether the girl wasn't feeling just a tiny bit uncomfortable. Leila and Patty in sheer, vivid sweaters, plaid sports skirts, brown-and-white, rubber-soled shoes, rakish little felt hats, presented a contrast that was, at least, striking.

And yet The Gingham's poise was undisturbed. True, she wasn't talking much, but he knew enough of the feminine adolescent to realize that lack of conversation does not always imply a sense of discomfort; that too much conversation is, usually, a surer indication of inward nervousness.

Four of the group—Ella, Leila, and two men—sheered off easily to the tennis courts, swinging rackets, chattering gayly. Patty and Boyce Trevor presently started an intent game of singles

in an adjacent court. Maclean and The Gingham were left on the bench. A sudden, dreadful suspicion leaped into his mind; and gradually, after a hasty survey of the situation, the suspicion became a certainty.

The Gingham had been set aside for his benefit!

It was true enough. The theory stood every possible test. There was no loophole. Methodically he went through a process of elimination. He couldn't very well devote his time to Leila Trevor—after their break of last November. They were now on polite speaking terms, but nothing else—an unsatisfactory relationship hovering between friendship and mutual boredom that was the result of a prolonged and intensive "rush" on his part which had amounted to nothing. Yet, with Leila's inherent savor-faire and his own ability to find amusement, he felt that they could carry off the situation well enough.

Then there was Patty Merril. She was obviously infatuated with Boyce Trevor—so much so that their names were always being mentioned in the same breath, and she had ceased to be a possible factor of interest to freelances of the stag line. Only Ella remained. She was, of course, the ideal hostess—but one never tried to monopolize Ella. She was too—well, general; treated every one in the same nice way; never paired, never sat out more than two dances in an evening.

The stark fact was irrefutable. The Pink Gingham had been set aside for him. This corn-fed, country belle had been selected to amuse the great Maclean, wit of the dinner table, mainstay of collegiate theatricals, editor of the wittiest collegiate publication in the country. His egotism was, at the moment supreme. Was it, he hazarded, some ghastly joke on Ella's part, some whimsical experiment in psychology? His reveries were broken into by The Gingham's voice.

"A penny for your thoughts, Mr. Wright!"

How utterly fatuous! Besides, he disliked being called Mr. Wright. He himself was accustomed to calling girls by their first names the second time he met them, and to have them utilize the familiar "Mac" in return—somehow he detested the intermediate stage of formality.

"Nothing particular, Mary."

Her eyelids flickered slightly; he detected the faintest perceptible smile, not a flirtatious smile, though. It conveyed, rather, a spirit of amiable tolerance—as if she were making allowances for him. It upset his equanimity.

"Do you always call girls by their first names as soon as you meet them?"

"Yes, Mary—if they interest me at all."

"And if they don't?"

"Why, I don't say enough to them to call them anything."

She laughed outright.

"You haven't had a chance to make your escape yet—besides, there are certain amenities to be observed."

What the dickens was she driving at? Making fun of him, or criticizing him—or flirting? He promptly decided to squelch her, as she deserved.

"I've been up at Ella's so often," he remarked casually, "that I know just how happy-go-lucky she likes her guests to be. The idea is to go off and do what you please whenever you want."

"If that's the case," she said, rising swiftly from the bench with a mocking little smile, "I'll go up to the house, and get my unpacking done before lunch. Thanks so much for enlightening me."

He stared after her retreating figure. Certainly, he had to admit, she had scored the first point. He turned to discover Ella coming off the courts, flushed and victorious.

"Your cousin is an original person," he remarked soberly.

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Ella—always loyal—merely said:

"I do hope you like her, Mac. It's really her first house party. She's perfectly sweet, and so anxious to be nice. She's got a wonderful character; rather like—like a finely tempered steel blade, if you see what I mean."

Like a tempered blade of steel. As he strolled toward the house in silence, at Ella's side, he reflected upon that statement. It was probably true. The unfortunate part of it was that a character of that kind, laudable as it was, could only be out of date at such a place as Pine Bay.

"Don't hand her your heaviest line," Ella said suddenly. "She might fall for it—and that would be dreadful!"

"No," he replied thoughtfully, "I don't think I will."

At four o'clock they were all standing in a noisy group upon the steps of the golf club. Boyce Trevor had gone in to see the secretary, to arrange for their temporary membership. Suddenly and almost tearfully The Gingham announced that she didn't know how to play golf.

"What?" shrieked Patty Merril.

"Don't play golf!" echoed Steven Malcolm.

"But what do you do in summer?" cried Leila Trevor.

"Miss Croft and I have arranged to take the Biddle roadster for a spin down the Shore Road," said Maclean Wright, quick as a flash. "That is, if it won't inconvenience you."

He was frowning angrily at Boyce Trevor.

"Why, take it, of course," Ella breathed gratefully. She alone realized at the moment the significance of that little sobriquet—the Finished Product.

He and The Gingham took the roadster and hummed down the chalk-white, winding road that led along a rock-strewn shore. He drove fast, yet confidently. Once or twice he glanced at

the girl beside him, immobile, hand clutching her little straw hat, faint smile hovering at her lips. Other girls had shown nervousness, even screamed, when he had taken corners in this fashion.

On they swept, through stretches of straggling pine forests, sandy soil gleaming ghostly white like pallid snow in the shadow of dark-columned alleys; past apple orchards fragrant and rustling in the soft afternoon breeze.

They stopped at a white, rambler-covered cottage where two genteel spinsters in alpaca dresses served tea and squares of crisp gingerbread at quite fabulous prices; sat at an oaken table in a somber room where copper kettles and pans gleamed in long rows upon the wainscoted walls. Conversation turned to plans for the week-end.

"There's to be a dance to-night at the Bluebell Club," he informed her. "I suppose we all go. Generally the Bluebell functions are a riot. Too generous with the liquor—"

"If that's the case," she said primly, "I'll stay home."

He set down his teacup with a clatter.

"You for prohibition?"

"In principle, anyway."

It was a tactical error on her part.

"I hardly drink at all myself," he assured her, "but I don't see why a man shouldn't be allowed to go to hell if he wants to."

He bit into a muffin as he watched her, hoping vaguely that she might be a little shocked. But she merely said:

"The crowd up here think of nothing but momentary pleasures."

Her voice trailed away, as if she were lost in a sudden maze of thought.

"Only thing worth while," he murmured, experiencing that pungently delightful cynicism which is the privilege of twenty-two.

His net conclusion, as they rode homeward through the lengthening pine

shadows was: 1. She was interesting—in a way. 2. She was totally "different." 3. She was virtuous to the *n*th degree. 4. She probed a little deeper into abstract problems than he. 5. He could not afford to devote much of his time to her.

That night Ella took them all to the dance at the Bluebell Club. It was a typical gathering of its kind, in which the newly poor and socially secure allowed itself to blend harmoniously with the newly rich and socially uncertain—because the one was indispensable to the other; because the newly rich supplied the Boston orchestra and the flowing cup, and because the newly poor supplied that intangible cachet of approval necessary for every successful Pine Bay function.

Ella's party entered the ballroom in a cheerful, chattering crowd, and out of an injudicious, but humane, impulse Maclean asked Mary Croft to dance. Although five negroes were blaring out an astoundingly syncopated version of the "Blue Danube" she could not toddle—tried to amiably, but simply couldn't. Maclean, who was an expert dancer and knew that he was, had to content himself with gliding about the room in the smooth, old-fashioned way. He never spoke while he danced, feeling that to do so was a species of sacrilege. Terpsichore was, to him, a muse whom one followed reverently or not at all.

At the end of twenty-four minutes—timed by the clock above a glimmering marble mantelpiece—he was still dancing with The Gingham.

Imperceptibly, but unerringly he approached the middle of the room where the stag line had gathered in an uncertain hollow square, and palpably paraded her charms to and fro, like the monotonous trips of a ferryboat, before the *blasé* cluster of dinner coats and youthful faces. But The Gingham didn't go.

Eventually—after the sixth dance—

he remarked laconically, with irreproachable, yet frigid politeness: "Seen the garden? Lovely."

They crossed the wide veranda, went down the steps into a formal garden of flower beds and gravel paths pallid blue in the light of a young moon. They found a bench and sat down in silence. Fireflies cavorted lazily in the blackness beneath the trees. The night was warm, fragrant, irresistible—the essence of summer. Mary Croft, he saw, was gazing earnestly up at the moon, her pointed little chin supported in one palm; elbow resting on knee. She looked especially attractive at the moment, in a clean, refreshing, nice way—so that, quite naturally, he leaned forward and unconcernedly kissed the soft curve of her cheek. She leaped up from the bench.

"How could you?" she gasped.
"How dare you!"

He, too, stood up.

"That's not a highly original remark," he said, smiling.

She flung a scornful glance at him, then hurried back toward the clubhouse. He lighted a cigarette, chuckling—but the chuckle seemed to stick in his throat. After all, it wasn't so funny. He began—strangest thing of all—to regret the impulse which had prompted that foolish little display of affection. A sacred rule of his code—never to regret an impulse—was thereby shattered. Confound the girl! What made her take life so seriously? He kicked loose gravel about the path for a moment or two; then turned and hurried after her, hands deep in his pockets, humming a worried little tune.

In the smoking room adjoining the ballroom a group of men were ladling from a silver bowl an electrical fluid, the precise composition of which was, as usual, the subject of much earnest speculation. The sound of their voices penetrated through the curtained archway that hid them. Some one swore

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loudly. Maclean, who had regained his place in the stag line, instinctively found his eyes searching for The Gingham. He discovered her in a corner with a young college boy, saw her wince as the profanity drifted to her ears. The boy at her side guffawed—as if he had heard something clever.

From beyond the curtains came a raucous voice, reciting an anecdote about a young man who went to a drug store. Maclean hurried through the archway, and faced the disheveled gathering at the punch bowl.

"Tone down, you fellows," he said, with all the casualness he could muster. "They can hear everything you say in the other room."

A man called Blythe, ruddy, bull-necked, broad of beam, his jet hair wildly disheveled, ambled unsteadily up to Maclean, and stood swaying before him.

"This from Maclean!" he said, addressing his companions with a flourish of his arm. "Admonition to guard our tongues—from the mos' profane sergeant ever known in the R. O. T. C.!"

Maclean flushed.

"There are occasions for swearing—like everything else."

Blythe chuckled congestedly; his face was quite purple.

"Oh—doesn't that get your goat? Why, God—"

"Shut up!" cried Maclean, and moved threateningly toward him.

Blythe backed away, laughing idiotically. Maclean turned and stalked out of the room. He felt distinctly a fool. He slid across the dance floor, approaching The Gingham, who was fox-trotting with a pallid, desperate-looking Italian count.

"Cut in?" he asked complacently.

To his utter amazement she whispered something in her partner's ear; they passed by him, without hesitation. The snub of snubs.

He was first dumfounded, then furious.

"I'll show her!" he told himself, gritting his teeth. "I'll show her if I'm troubling about her—after that!"

He felt, somehow, that she was sufficiently interested in him to be mildly jealous. He saw Blythe's wife, slender, blond, and suave, dancing. He cut in; clasped her to him. They danced perfectly together, in a haze of rhythmic emotion. He spent the balance of the evening with her. In a secluded corner of the veranda they sat out and watched the progress of the moon.

At one o'clock Boyce Trevor found them out there; and whispered hurriedly to Maclean:

"Don't overdo it, Mac. Blythe has his eye on you—and you know how ugly he can be when he loses his senses."

This had no effect whatever on Maclean.

By two the dance was over. At the front door he discovered Mary Croft waiting for Blythe's coupé to take her home. Ella, it appeared, had somehow missed her in the confusion; and had already gone home.

"For Heaven's sake, don't let Blythe drive you home!" Maclean managed to whisper in her ear. "You don't know the man—"

"You, of all people, to try to protect me!" she cried scornfully, and with a toss of her head, she climbed into Blythe's coupé; waved a gay little hand to Boyce Trevor, and disappeared in the darkness of the night.

She was in Ella's house five minutes later—because Maclean, driving the Biddle roadster, kept close behind Blythe's coupé all the way. And Blythe knew it.

The whole of the following day was devoted to a picnic upon the red rocks of Pine Point. It was all terribly dull and stupid, Maclean thought. Obviously meant to be paired off with Mary—even she couldn't deny it—he

found the situation, at best, unsatisfactory. Her attitude toward him was one of admirably cool formality, a clever attitude because no one detected it but himself; it was, nevertheless, vastly different from the pleasantly flirtatious spirit that had prevailed over their motor ride the afternoon before.

"I'm making a complete fool of myself," he told himself, and wondered why he did it. Assiduously he supplied her with everything that was to be found in the tempting picnic baskets—sandwiches, ginger ale, cake and fruit—and received on each occasion her polite, but perfunctory, thanks. Early in the afternoon he pleaded the necessity of sending a telegram from Pine Bay village, and made his escape in the roadster in a state of solitary depression. The shouts of merriment that pursued him from the rock-strewn beach seemed a mockery.

Maybe, as Ella had said, the girl had a character like a finely tempered blade of steel. Admirable, perhaps, but rather more of a liability than an asset these days, he concluded cynically. He pondered over this as he drove a golf ball viciously around five holes—making the fourth in bogey, and not even realizing the fact.

He decided to keep up the Blythe campaign. It provided the necessary fillip to life. There was to be a dance at Ella's house that evening. He wondered obscurely whether Mary Croft had even noticed the Blythe campaign, and decided that he didn't care whether she had noticed it or not—and knew suddenly that he was lying to himself.

On the veranda of Ella Wentworth's home, at midnight of that same day, Maclean and Mrs. Blythe were sitting out—had been sitting out for nearly an hour. Across the cream-colored window shades dancing figures flitted, attenuated and grotesque. From the half-open door came the rising and fall-

ing cadence of the orchestra—two banjos, a saxophone, and a metallic piano:

"Say it with mu-sic,
Beau-tee-ful mu-sic.
Somehow, they'd rather be kissed."

Maclean was in a state of somber depression, following a ten-minute spell of silence. He decided ultimately, as he watched Mrs. Blythe inhaling her cigarette from its amber holder with that ostentation which some women consider a necessary accompaniment to the worship of nicotine, that the whole business was excessively foolish. His mind, somehow, kept reverting to Mary Croft—and the fact annoyed him. He prepared to rise, with an elaborate and polite excuse that would bring them back to the dance floor, but at that moment Boyce Trevor came up to them hurriedly, in a state of ill-concealed agitation.

"You two," he whispered, "you're crazy! Blythe's been drinking all the evening. He's fighting mad. Looking for you both! Says he wants to kill you, Mac. You know how he gets—"

He seized Mrs. Blythe gently by the arm.

"Come on, Dorothy. I'll take you home."

She agreed with the utmost placidity, conveying to Maclean an absurd impression that such situations were almost daily incidents in her existence.

"There's only one thing for you to do, Mac," Trevor said gravely. "Go up to your room, and stay there till the others get Blythe out of the house."

Maclean flushed hotly.

"Nonsense! There's no harm—"

"Of course there's no harm," Trevor told him sharply. "Every one realizes that. But don't be a fool. Blythe isn't sane. Do as I tell you and we'll all thank you for it. No heroics required against a man in Blythe's condition."

He hurried Mrs. Blythe away toward a waiting, purring car whose headlights were casting twin, oblique shafts of light across the darkness of the lawn.

Maclean wandered down the veranda in a state of indecision. Was discretion, he asked himself slowly, in this case the better part of valor? Ella Wentworth herself decided the problem for him by appearing suddenly on the lighted threshold and whispering to him:

"Please go upstairs, Mac—as Boyce suggested. We don't want any more trouble than we can help."

He climbed the stairs soberly to his room, and sat there smoking cigarettes, meditating upon the absurdity of it all. If only men and women could learn to take pleasures in moderation. That, he concluded, was the crux of the trouble. Weary youth, attempting the gamut of emotions, simply to prevent itself from falling asleep of sheer boredom. They were all the same, except Ella—and Mary Croft, The Gingham. Suppose every one behaved and thought as she did—how would his world be then? He wondered, and the idea fascinated him.

He could hear her now, moving slowly about the creaking floor of her bedroom, which was next to his. Through the flimsy partition door, concealed by a chintz curtain stretched across a darkened alcove, he could hear the tinkling sound of things upon her dressing table. She could not sleep in the house, she had confessed to him; it was so utterly different in atmosphere from the century-old serenity of her own home. A vestal virgin, he mused, preparing meticulously for her night vigil.

His lips curved into a gentle smile.

Suddenly he sat bolt upright in his chair, as there came to his ears the sound of some tremendous, unwieldy bulk crashing against the woodwork of the passage outside his room.

"Maclean Wright! Where are you?" called a thick voice.

Something deep down within him, uncontrollable and victorious over fear, made him answer loudly and calmly:

"Right in here, Blythe."

The door burst open, clattering against the wall. Blythe faced him, a swaying, menacing, pitiable yet terrifying figure, all disheveled—eyes bloodshot, lips twitching.

"Where's my wife?"

Maclean had a wild desire to laugh, but controlled himself.

"Trevor took her home some time ago," he said calmly.

He lighted another cigarette, and stood up, his back to the chintz-curtained alcove. Blythe watched his every movement with frowning suspicion.

"Where's proof?" he demanded, then waving an accusing finger, shouted: "You're a damn liar—at's what you are!"

With a quick, decisive movement he whipped out from his pocket something that gleamed brightly in the lamplight; raised it menacingly. For perhaps the first time in his life Maclean was acutely conscious of fear; knew he was desperately afraid; felt a spasm of numbing terror creeping through his veins.

"Where's proof?" Blythe reiterated. "I want proof, by Jove, or I'll shoot you!"

His voice rose to a shrill scream.

"Put that gun down and listen to me," Maclean said. His voice was trembling, and he was horribly aware of it. "There's absolutely nothing between Mrs. Blythe and myself. You ought to be ashamed of yourself to suggest it. You're talking arrant nonsense, and acting like a temperamental peasant!"

"You're a liar!" Blythe bellowed, and his fingers closed convulsively about the revolver. "You're—" The words died, all of a sudden,

queerly upon his lips; his eyes were wide and round with amazement. At that instant Maclean was conscious of something warm and white sliding about his neck; white arms—a woman's arms. He heard, as in a dream, Mary Croft's voice, cool and soft, directly behind him:

"I think you have made a mistake, Mr. Blythe."

Blythe fidgeted, toyed with the revolver, his lips moving soundlessly. Maclean, taut and motionless, was dimly aware of a moth beating itself to a frantic death against a rose-shaded lamp upon a near-by table; the sound reached his ears, eerily intensified in the utter stillness of the room. He heard, too, Mary's breathing, quick and tremulous, behind him. Blythe continued to stare at her dumbly.

"What you doin' here'n Mac's room?" he asked suddenly, and his wavering hand indicated the chintz curtain. He smiled craftily. "'Course. I see! Mos' convenient. Just step behin' there when any one comes in. Oh—clever!"

Maclean, eyes still fastened on the revolver, felt his heart leap within him. He wanted with all his strength to hit the man, knock him down, crush him—as he deserved to be crushed. He tried to lunge forward, but strong white arms detained him. He managed, then, to find his voice.

"Miss Croft and I were married this afternoon, Blythe," he said with a tremendous effort at calmness. "Now, kindly get out of this room!"

"Say that again!" Blythe demanded.

Maclean repeated what he had said.

Blythe passed a quivering hand over his brow. He seemed suddenly dazed, helpless.

"I don't understand!" he moaned. "Everythin's all mixed up—an' upset. Guess I made a mistake."

He stood still, indecisively, for a moment or two; then, slipping the revolver

into his pocket, saluted them gravely and reeled from the room.

They faced each other—The Gingham and the Finished Product—only she wasn't wearing gingham this time, but a filmy, feminine thing of soft, cream-colored material and lace and ribbons and flowers; her hair fell in rippling waves, with a sheen like satin in the lamplight, over her slender shoulders. She was, he thought, almost irrelevantly, quite the loveliest thing he had ever seen.

"Good heavens!" he said. "You shouldn't have done that!"

She was pale, defiant, wearing a mocking little smile.

"Shouldn't I? Well—I didn't want a murder to happen. I heard his threat; and I don't think there's the slightest doubt—he would have shot you."

Then, as a new aspect of the situation seemed to strike her, she changed tone completely. Eyes flashing, she demanded:

"But *how dare* you say that we were married?"

"We will, of course, get married to-morrow—first thing," he assured her gravely, hands deep in pockets as he paced the length of the room.

She regarded him with a twisted little smile.

"Not at all. I'll be on my way home long before you're up to-morrow."

"You can't," he stammered, galvanized to action. "You can't. It would look—it would look—"

She started back toward her own room. When she had reached the chintz curtain she turned and faced him.

"I suppose I ought to thank you, any way," she remarked dispassionately, "for coming up to the mark so wonderfully quickly. I see now why they call you the Finished Product."

He seized her hands.

"Look here! You're going to marry

me some day, so why put it off? I decided that ages ago—while I was driving a golf ball over the links this afternoon."

It was then that she burst into tears, and buried her head on his shoulder.

"You're so awfully, awfully polite,"

she sobbed. "Even w-when you kissed me in the garden l-last night. How can I tell whether you really—"

He interrupted her effectively.

"Convinced?" he asked after a while.

"Almost!" she answered, a trifle breathlessly.

THE invasion of London by the American narrow-toed shoe, says the *New York Sun*, has caused many fashionable women to have the little toe of each foot amputated! This reminds one of the time-worn story of the step-sisters of Cinderella who cut off not only their toes, but part of their heels in order to don the glass slipper and win the prince. But that was merely fancy, and this, incredible as it seems, is fact, not fiction.

PARISIAN makers of fashion are at present busily engaged in designing a gown which, they say, will fill an obvious want. The new frock is to be designated a "robe de divorce" and will be worn exclusively by women who are participating in that legal ceremony. And it does seem, in view of the embarrassing complications which occur—even in America!—during such proceedings that such a gown might prove a Heaven-sent blessing for all concerned.

PAIR AVENUE, one of New York's most fashionable thoroughfares, recently witnessed an amazing spectacle within its sacred precincts. For several days astonished beholders might well have believed that Aladdin had rubbed his magic lamp and transformed that prim avenue into the crowded marts of Cairo on a fête day—or Rome at carnival time. For, within the bounds of several blocks, Park Avenue seethed with crowds of smartly gowned women and well-dressed men all participating in the various amusements offered for their entertainment and buying with gay abandon the variety of articles—useful and frivolous—designed to bring into the coffers of those who planned this unique street fair money for charity.

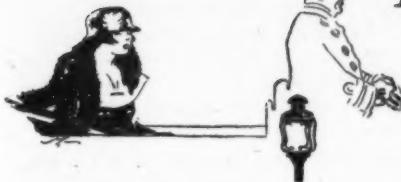
As the merrymakers entered Park Avenue at the beginning of the carnival, a circus held sway—a real old-time tent show with dogs and ponies, clowns and acrobats, side shows and all. And, most interesting of all, society women, both matrons and buds, were barkers, ticket sellers, ticket takers, venders of peanuts, pop corn and circus lemonade! When the circus had been witnessed there were other entertainments too numerous to mention. But one laughing throng clustered about an amusing booth watching well-known dowagers throw baseballs at small openings—if their aim was good a small and squealing pig came tumbling out!

An open-air theater, called the "Grand Giggle" and presided over by Mrs. Lydig Hoyt, presented to the clamoring crowd famous Broadway stars.

Besides the entertainments, there were gay booths fantastically designed and flaunting the most flaming colors, in which society women in picturesque costumes hawked their wares. And the children were not forgotten. They wandered about feeling, in truth, like Alice in Wonderland as they sat in a tiny hut and drank make-believe tea served by the Mad Hatter himself.

But more decorative even than the booths and the variegated colors of the carnival were the debbs and subdebs, in dainty frocks, who mingled with the visitors and looked themselves like the flowers of the lovely garden that marked the end of Park Avenue's transformation.

The Rebound



By Beatrice Ravenel

Author of "The High Cost of Conscience,"
"The Trump Card," etc.



WELL, then, you mean that you don't intend to help me at all?" asked Howard van Ryn, almost angrily.

"You know that I would do anything in the world for you, Howard, that I could do." Miriam Gaines answered him in her rich, patient voice, a voice a little too mature for a girl of twenty-four.

As she sat in the great overstuffed armchair, she suggested the thought that all the extremely expensive, but commonplace, furnishings of the Gaines drawing-room had been chosen for her background. She, too, was handsome without distinction, well-made, good, but rather unimaginative.

In comparison, the young man who had been restlessly pacing the long Oriental rug might have been caught in some legendary forest, tamed and dressed in conventional clothes, but still imperfectly domesticated. With his straight, beautiful features, his slightly long hair, and his resilient walk, he might have been an interpreter of the arts, a musician for choice. As a matter of fact, he had the temperament without the brains, the desire without the creative power. Miriam had found that out long ago.

"Would you—anything?" he demanded eagerly.

"Of course."

A shame-faced look came into his deep-set, very bright eyes.

"You might hock your pearls," he blurted out.

The girl took the suggestion very simply. A shade of greater weariness crossed her face.

"I did that the last time—you needed money. I managed it because I had a synthetic string made in Paris, just like them. Dad had been so afraid of my being robbed while we were traveling. But as for my other jewels, you know that I don't dare to make away with them. He likes to see me wear them, and notices if I don't."

Howard dropped into a chair.

"By Gad!" he ejaculated bitterly. "It is the most extraordinary thing—the daughter of a rich man, like you, never seeming to have anything at her own disposal. I suppose, since you don't ride in street cars, he considers that you don't even need car fare."

The girl was silent. Plain speaking had, for a long time, been the order of the day, at least on his part. She was thinking, as she always did, during one of these painful and increasingly frequent interviews, how greatly and strangely things had changed. The first time that Howard had come to her with his troubles, had let her see how worried he was by so unimportant a trifle as money, she had been thrilled by the sense of new intimacy. It had been wonderful to be so close to Howard as that, to know the details of his affairs.

The first time that she had ventured, greatly daring, to ask for the privilege of helping him, she had trembled for fear of offending his deli-

cacy. When he had reluctantly accepted, she had been overwhelmed with happiness. He had been able, with self-respect, to do so because their love justified him. Trivialities like money did not count between them.

With one of his abrupt movements he got up again and went to the other end of the room, seating himself at the piano. Miriam sighed with relief. He would play himself into a good humor. If he was also counting on the hypnotic effect that his music exercised over her—well, she didn't mind that. Howard was a spoiled child; one doesn't resent the infantile craft that a child uses, if the child loves one. He was playing something sweet and old-fashioned, launched directly at her nerves, instead of the curious, incomprehensible modern stuff that he liked. She went on with her own thoughts.

She had long ceased to think of money as trivial. Her father was also, in his way, old-fashioned. He considered that the less women had to do with business, the better. He consistently, therefore, provided lavishly for Miriam's needs and gave her comparatively little spending money, although she had, for some years, been the mistress of his house. Until now she had never minded.

Miriam's friends had often wondered why she did not marry. They would have called her just the type to be chosen early, probably by some well-to-do, not too young, professional man, who wanted a capable hostess for his guests and a dependable companion for his declining years. "Miriam would be an *ideal* wife for a rich widower," Edith Travis had once summed her up. The reason for Miss Gaines' continued celibacy was the young man whose blond head seemed to focus the bright forenoon sunshine. He turned and spoke across the room.

"Are you thinking—about it?"

She went to him and stood, with her

arm resting on the piano, facing the downcast, mobile countenance.

"How much do you want?"

"It isn't a question of *wanting*—this time." As though with a jerk of his will, he looked squarely at her, the urgency of desperate sincerity in his eyes. "I *must* have seven thousand dollars—by to-morrow!" Behind his extraordinary vigor of manner was the hint of a threat. Again the contrast with his old way of deference, of devotion, stabbed the girl.

"But, Howard, how do you expect me to get a sum like that?"

"If you loved me as you say you do, you'd get it some way," he answered doggedly. "Women have staged a robbery before this. That's one way."

"Do you mean you want me to make Dad believe that somebody has stolen my diamonds? And sell them myself? I couldn't! It would mean so much lying to him. Besides, he would never rest until he got to the bottom of it. They were mother's. I couldn't keep it up."

"I'm afraid you couldn't," he answered dryly. The implication that not only a surplusage of conscience, but also a lack of brains lay at the root of her inability, made her flush.

"Can't it wait for a while, Howard?" she asked. "Dad has always said that when I was twenty-five he would give me the income from that apartment house that belonged to mother. Can't you put the people off for a few months?"

"No."

"Isn't it—your old debts?"

"Oh, it began that way," he answered evasively. He got up and paced the room again. On the return trip he stopped behind her, placing his hands lightly on her shoulders. "Mirry," he said, in the caressing tone that was so hypnotic to her will, "I'm in the devil of a fix. When I say that I must have the money by to-morrow, I'm in

dead earnest." As she tried to turn, the grip on her shoulders grew stronger. "No, don't look at me. There's not a soul in the world I could tell this to except you, because—well, you'll understand, you'll make allowances. You do love me, don't you, darling?"

"Yes," said Miriam huskily. A premonition of what was coming ran through her veins like ice.

"You know how I've worried over those ghastly debts of mine—made when I was trying to be a musician and found out I'd never be anything more than a gifted amateur. I've even taken money from you! Yes, I know you were glad to help, but a man hates to be under obligations of that kind to a woman. I got tired of having the things dragging after me, year after year, like a ball and chain on my ankle. I wanted"—the hands settled down in two affectionate little pressures—"I wanted to be able to marry."

"You needn't have waited for that," said Miriam in a low voice.

"I thought differently. Well, I did just as millions of other fools have done—I tried to get rich quick. With the usual result!"

"You've been speculating?"

"Yes—" He hesitated, then repeated firmly: "Yes."

"And lost?"

"Goodness, yes! But that's not the worst. The money I used—wasn't all mine."

"If it was mine it was yours," said the girl loyally.

The hands were withdrawn from her shoulders.

"Why won't you understand?" cried Howard, impatience rasping through his voice. "It was— See here, don't you know that your father is coming home to-morrow, instead of two weeks from now, as he intended? Use a little imagination! I'm the only person—his secretary—who could possibly have had access to his safe—"

The girl was silent, gazing into his distorted face.

"For some reason," he added fiercely, "he left a large amount of money in it, in bills. When he comes back they must be there. They—are not there now." He threw his hands out. "Well, why don't you say something? Call me—anything, only don't look at me like a martyr—as though I didn't belong in the same world with you!" With something like a groan he turned to the window. "If you don't want to help me, say so—and I'll go. I can always blow my brains out. Only, I must say, it's a nice kind of love—a noble, exalted, self-sacrificing kind, that turns a man down, throws him over just when he needs it most—when it's the only thing on God's green earth he's got to turn to."

The edge of his urgency cut through the cold misery that made her feel like a lump of lead. Quite suddenly a phrase she had once read in a book came back to her. "Where is the beauty of forgiveness unless there is something to forgive?" She put her hand strongly over his.

"Poor Howard!" she said gently.

He caught her to him.

"You'll help me?"

"I'll do all I can. If there is no other way I'll go to Aunt Isabel and ask her to lend me the money. When Daddy gives me my birthday present I can pay her back." She forced herself to speak naturally. "I'll have to let her think that I've been horribly extravagant. The only trouble is, she is such a chatter box. She might tell Dad—afterward."

"We'll have to chance that," Howard said eagerly. He had recovered his poise miraculously, all in a minute, as she told herself, at the hope of rescue. The leaden weight settled over her again. Was Howard one of those hopelessly shallow people who are only remorseful when in danger of being

found out? Then the contrition and the affectionate glow in his eyes—a look that she had missed there for a long time—made her reproach herself.

"You're a wonder, Mirry!" he was saying. "I swear to you it was the first time and it shall be the last. You're a thousand times too good for me." A trace of his usual trickish smile crossed his face. "I'm glad that I'm a fatalist. I should hate to think that I was responsible—all by myself—for everything I did! When will you go to your aunt?"

"I'll drop in to lunch. That always puts her in a good humor."

"Diplomatic, eh? Shall I come in this afternoon? Right-o." A dull flush mounted suddenly to his cheeks. "I hate to have you do this. Don't think too badly of me, Miriam, will you, no matter what you hear of me at—at any time? It would be a lot better for you if you dropped me and married Jerome Curtis. He's what you call a worthy young man and a safe bet. Don't look so miserable. It will all come right—if you get around auntie. Smile, just once!" He kissed her cheek lightly. "Well, good-by until this afternoon."

The very inferior smile which Miriam produced died an untimely death as soon as Howard had left her. The significance of what he had told her, no longer colored by the charm of his presence, overwhelmed her. Many times she had made excuses for him, but there had never been anything like this. This was terrible. His egotism, his shifting of ethical standards which to her were immovable, were as nothing in comparison.

His confession had done something to her of which she was becoming dimly aware. Something, in that first moment of dumb shock, had changed her, deep in the subconscious mind which makes our decisions for us, and frequently does not, until long afterward, inform us of the fact. She got up

wearily. At least, there was a task for her to do this morning. She had promised. She needn't sit and think.

Aunt Isabel would be an ordeal. Like many ladies who have retired from the world by reason of age and disabilities, she reserved the right to hear all the evidence for and against its doings, and to judge it relentlessly. Gossip she loved. The last time that her great-niece had called upon her, she had been full of a rumor of unusual point.

Was it true that Hamilton Gaines' secretary, that good-looking young man who played, was attentive to Miriam? Well, if Miriam chose to be secretive, she might be! She, Aunt Isabel, had heard a secret engagement hinted at, one, moreover, that had been going on for a long time. If it was merely a rumor, all the better. She had heard other things about the young man. You couldn't blame him; *she* blamed the women.

According to Aunt Isabel's Victorian view, men were constitutionally unable to protect themselves from temptation. Nature had made them that way. If society wanted to protest, it had to take it out on the erring women. They knew better, they were the real offenders. She had heard the young man's name bracketed with that of Mrs. Travis, that pretty, fair Edith Travis, Miriam's school friend. Was there anything in it? It wasn't the first time Edith had been talked about!

Miriam had assured the old gourmand of reputations that there couldn't possibly be any truth in the story. She knew both of them well.

She might as well go and make the assault on Aunt Isabel's pocket. If that failed— It mustn't fail! Aunt Isabel, under an exterior of crustiness and criticism, loved Miriam better than anything in the world. If she were convinced that the girl really needed the money, she would give it to her, rather than allow her to be unhappy.

The door at the end of the room opened suddenly. It may be incorrect to speak of a short-skirted figure sailing in, but that was the effect produced by the vision that came, with a soft rush, up to Miss Gaines.

"Oh, Mirry—I told Wickham I'd come right in. He said you were here." She looked around swiftly. "Are you alone?" The little ungloved hands were hot and tremulous. The kiss that the newcomer pressed on Miriam's cheek was unduly feverish for a morning-call salute.

"Has anything happened, Edith—anything wrong?" her hostess asked anxiously. She hoped not. She could not bear much more. Then she felt ashamed. If there had been another of those painful crises to which the Travis household was subject, Edith needed her sympathy. She had come to count on it. The same sense of responsibility that makes a Chinaman who has pulled a man out of the water feel concerned about him for the rest of his life inspired Miriam. As Jerome Curtis had observed, with his sardonic smile, "Your relation with my cousin Edith is just a case of 'one good turn deserves another'—all the good turns coming from the same side. I admit that she has a way."

Edith Travis raised her lovely, tragic eyes.

"Everything is forever wrong," she said, as though making a simple statement of fact. "But I'm at last going to try to make it right. Let me sit down. I've felt out of breath all the morning, just as though I had been running."

As she leaned back in one of the huge chairs and closed her beautifully shaped eyelids, she again caused Miriam to verify her conviction that Edith was quite the most appealing woman whom she knew. She was so blond that she sometimes looked luminous. The tones of her hair and skin had the transparent

6—Ains.

values generally seen only in flowers or in children. She had, besides, a patrician quality that made Miriam feel almost clumsy. And as though that were not enough, she possessed the indefinable charm that Jerome called "way."

"If you only have a way, you know," he had added, "you can do anything in the world and the public will stand for it."

People had stood for a good deal from Edith. Her sisters, sisters-in-law, and cousins were in the habit of protesting, half-seriously, that their husbands were willing to put themselves out far more for Edith than for their own spouses. Whenever Chester Travis' affair got into inextricable tangles, they came to the rescue, for Edith's sake. Whenever Edith herself had been unpardonably indiscreet, either in the way of extravagance or flirtation, they were pretty apt to condone her conduct, because—hang it all!—the poor girl ought to have some compensations for such a rotten husband as Chester. Edith's way was equal to the rose or the ring of the fairy tale. Before she spoke again it had laid its spell over Miriam.

"I couldn't go without telling you good-by," Edith said after a moment. "I had made my plans for leaving yesterday, but then—I stayed over." She leaned forward, and curled her hands into the other's capable, comforting fingers. "I never told you before. I hate sentimental talk—between women," added Edith characteristically. "But I want you to know that I've always admired you more than any of our set. You're so dependable. I couldn't imagine your doing anything mean or underhand. You're not catty—and most women are, don't you think so?"

"Oh, no, dear!" said Miriam warmly. "But where—"

"Oh, yes. Why I am!" cried Edith

in a burst of self-abasement. "I've done things—oh, Miriam, promise me that you won't think hardly of me, you won't despise me, no matter what you may hear about me!"

"Edith!" cried her friend, a ray of light breaking upon her. "Are you going away to get a divorce?"

Edith's eyes avoided hers.

"It—it will probably end that way," she said evasively. She got to her feet with her invariable, languid grace. "I must go. *Are* my lids red? I want to see Jerome about some business before I leave." She smiled faintly. "I wish you would marry Jerome. Then you would be my cousin. Though I don't suppose it will matter to me now. For Heaven's sake, don't let me go out with a shiny nose." She opened her immense gold-mesh bag. As she fumbled among its crowded contents, something fat and hard bounced out upon the rug, half-protruding from the envelope which contained it.

"What a lot of money!" said Miriam involuntarily. "Aren't you afraid to carry it around like that?"

Edith stooped for it and lifted a face quite pink with the exertion.

"I have to pay some things. Perhaps—it is a risk. It's almost seven thousand dollars, all in big bills."

"But, Edie, how foolish! Why don't you use checks? Any one could snatch that bag. You hear of so many robberies."

"I suppose—" Edith began uncertainly. She made up her mind. "I meant to pay the bills first, but I'm afraid of missing Jerome if I do. Would you mind my leaving the money here while I go downtown? I'll stop on my way back. You don't mind?"

"Certainly not," said Miriam. She opened the heavy mahogany desk which stood near the window. "Lock it in this drawer. Now, take the key with you. Yes, I'd rather you did. I must

go out to lunch. Will you be back before then?"

"Oh, yes—long before."

After Edith had trailed out with that air of romance that accompanied all her comings and goings, Miriam remained looking uneasily at the desk. It disturbed her to be the custodian of so much money. What a feather-brained creature Edie was to carry it about with her, in a gold-mesh bag! Almost seven thousand dollars—all—in big bills. It sounded like an echo. That was the very sum Howard wanted. She hoped that Edith would not make her late at Aunt Isabel's.

What else was it that Edith had said that sounded like an echo? Not to think too badly of her, no matter what she heard? Wasn't that the very entreaty, almost in the same words, that Howard had made to her?

She passed her hands brusquely over her forehead, as though to brush some disagreeable thought away. It was all Aunt Isabel's fault, her repetition of spiteful gossip, that was tormenting her with these horrible fancies. She wouldn't believe them—she wouldn't!

Seven thousand dollars! Where had Edith got so much money? She was always complaining that Chester gave her next to nothing.

Her mind was full of quotations this morning. "The love of money is the root of all evil." She came nearer hating it, because of what it had done to Howard.

She stood, lost in a cloud of thought that was like a swarm of biting insects, staring at the desk as though it were a cage that held some venomous reptile. Then she went quickly to her bedroom. From the upper shelf of a closet she took down a small box and began turning its contents over violently.

It was early in the afternoon of the same day that the smooth-haired and discreet-looking young man in the outer

office of the law firm of Masters & Curtis received an unlooked-for, but delightful surprise. With a manner of subdued excitement he sought the junior partner, and informed him that the lady who had called that morning had again arrived and insistently desired an interview. Several ladies had called that morning, but Jerome Curtis said with a half smile, "Show Mrs. Travis in." He recognized the effect that Edith habitually produced upon the adolescent of the human species.

"Well, what can I do for you this time?" Jerome asked, when Edith was seated in the chair beside his desk. "Changed your mind about selling those securities? I told you it would take some time. They're pretty dormant at present."

"Oh, no, no!" cried the lovely lady. "Oh, Jerome, something awful has happened! I've been robbed!"

"How?" His eye glanced toward her gold-mesh bag. "Who robbed you?"

Edith's fluttering hands wrung each other.

"You'll never believe me. I shouldn't have believed it myself, only—why, no one else *could* have. And she absolutely denies that I ever even gave her the money."

"Sit down, Edith. Take it slowly," said her cousin equably. "Now, drink this water. Take all the time you want. When you are ready, tell me in words of one syllable what has happened. In the first place, whom are you accusing?"

"Miriam Gaines!" cried Edith wildly. "The very *last* person—"

Jerome Travis looked fixedly at her. Then he relieved her shaking hand of the glass and patted her arm.

"My dear child," he said persuasively, "you're all wrought up, aren't you? Head going round? Nervous for some time, eh? Don't wonder. Now, go home and drink something hot

and go to bed. You don't need a lawyer. What you want is a doctor. You're beginning to suffer from hallucinations."

"You don't believe me!" she flashed. "I might have known that you wouldn't believe an angel from heaven against Miriam."

"I should take Miriam's word against any angel, arch or plain white." Jerome shook his square, intelligent head. "You're imagining things, Edith, or else you've made a ghastly mistake. I don't see what you see."

"But I did give it to her to keep for me—"

"Any witnesses?"

"No. And now she says that she never saw it."

"Then she never did see it. You gave it to somebody else and mixed things up. That would be rather characteristic of you, by the way."

"But the key—here is the key!" Edith almost shrieked, thrusting a small brass object at him. "We locked the money in her desk. When I went back, there was another key in the lock of the drawer, one that hadn't been polished for ages—and both keys fit!"

"That key proves nothing. You might have got it anywhere else. Miriam's desk is the kind you buy anywhere—lots of keys would fit it. Was she out of the room after—after you say you locked up the money?"

"She says that she went to her room for not more than fifteen minutes, between my two visits."

"Then, supposing the money had been there, some one else had the chance of taking it. The desk, moreover, is next to the window. How much money was it, by the way?"

"Seven thousand dollars, almost. In large bills."

Her cousin's stocky figure sank into the chair on the other side of the rug. Under his horrified gaze she shifted her position uneasily.

"My dear Edith," he uttered patiently, "if you are in a condition of mind that inspired you to take your walks abroad in New York with seven thousand dollars—in your bag—I thought so—good Lord!—do you expect me to treat your wild statements seriously? You must be—"

"I was going away. I was paying everything I owed first."

"But why not checks, drafts, anything?"

"It wasn't convenient," she broke out defiantly. "Jerome, suppose I were an utter stranger to you, and told you I had been robbed. How would you tell me to act?"

"If you had a case, I should advise you to sue."

Her hands fluttered helplessly.

"But I *couldn't* sue. That's just it."

"Why not?" he interrogated with sudden sternness.

"Because—they might ask me where I got the money."

"And you *couldn't* tell?"

"No," she whispered.

Her cousin leaned forward, forcing her hunted eyes to meet his.

"Edith, you said that you were going away. Were you going—alone?"

The woman threw her head back. A curious expression, half supplication, half challenge, turned her face into a perfectly molded and tinted mask. Jerome's own arraignment look softened. He told himself, satirically, that Edith was working a new phase of her way on him. He had never been in love with her. He had, for years, loved some one else. Yet he could not for the life of him be otherwise than tender to Edith. She looked so lovely and so helpless.

"My dear," he said gently, "don't you feel like telling me the whole story? You've confided to me before things that were pretty—er—crucial. And haven't I stood by you and done my

darndest to pull you out of the hole? Haven't I always been a good pal?"

A little smile hovered around the tucked-in corners of Edith's mouth. Then tragedy came back.

"You couldn't help me this time."

"You never can tell. Now, listen to me. If you want to be rid of Chester, I certainly don't blame you! Get a legal separation. You won't have any difficulty. But, whatever you do, don't put yourself in the wrong. Don't give him the ghost of any grounds against you. I suppose," he added with the abrupt, taking-for-granted tone that had shocked facts out of many witnesses, "some man gave you that money."

Involuntarily, all but imperceptibly, her eyelids flickered.

"Then get it back to him some way, as soon as you can."

"But I tell you," she wailed, "I gave it to her! Will you do this for me? Will you go to Miriam with me and—satisfy yourself? It's the only way."

"Yes," Jerome answered soothingly. "Of course. I'm sure that Miriam can make everything perfectly satisfactory, all the way round."

An hour later as Jerome sat on a sofa in the Gaines drawing-room, somewhat in the attitude of a judge, he smiled, as a judge might in the face of preposterous evidence. Opposite, there was a grandiose structure of Italian wood carving, and on either side of it sat two women. He had listened to a recapitulation, diffuse in detail and semihysterical in tone, of Edith's side of the case. He had heard Miriam's quiet assurance that she knew nothing whatever about the money. The case was clear to him. To doubt Miriam never entered his mind. The only disturbing element was the ring of sincerity in Edith's voice.

"First of all"—he delivered his verdict—"your pardon should be asked,

Miriam, for having this scene thrust upon you. Nothing but my hope of convincing Edith of her mistake induced me to assist in it. It is plain that she left her money somewhere else, that in her evident nervousness she confused her memories, and—”

He stopped short. The door into the hall was opening and a moment later Howard van Ryn appeared. The first object that he caught sight of was the glowing figure of Edith, bathed in the afternoon sunlight. A look of extraordinary surprise came into his face.

“I thought you had gone yesterday!” he exclaimed, as though the words were started out of him.

He checked himself then, but it was too late.

Edith shot to her feet. Jerome, with his faculty, trained in the courtroom, for guessing the psychological processes of others, grasped in a flash what had happened: The suppressed, bitter accusation in Howard's tone had furnished the last grain to tip the balance of Edith's self-control, teetering as it had been all day. For a moment she seemed about to burst into tears. Instead, she turned on Howard with the passionate need of a woman wrongfully accused, the need, bursting through reserve, to justify herself at any cost.

“What do you mean?” she asked tensely. “Why shouldn't I stay a day longer if I wanted to?”

The air was full of vibrations, turmoil, restless undercurrents. Howard's eyes went from one to another, like a man who has made a fearful break, but has a desperate hope that the sea of good manners may be able to close over and cover it. He crossed swiftly to Miriam, as though confident of her coöperation. She stood as quietly as usual.

“You got what I sent you?” she asked in a natural tone.

“Yes,” he half stammered.

“And you put it back where it came from?”

He nodded. To Jerome, watching closely, it was evident that Howard was miserably wondering how much Miriam had understood. Her question, though it might have referred to a borrowed book, made Edith stare. Miriam went nearer to Howard and said something in so low a tone that Jerome barely caught the words: “You were going away to-day, weren't you?” All at once Howard's face looked stricken and gray. He realized that Miriam had understood everything.

The meaning was clear to Jerome, also. Rumors, side lights of gossip, recollections of Howard and Edith dancing together. Why hadn't he understood it before? Edith had the social and sentimental training to keep a real lover hidden behind one or more stalking horses. “However,” said Jerome to himself, “in every love affair there is a breaking point. And poor Edie has reached hers.” The kindest thing he could do was to get her away before she betrayed herself even more recklessly. How she would hate herself afterward!

“Well, hadn't we better be going?” he asked her. But she looked past him. Her eyes saw only Howard.

“What does she mean?” she demanded in a high, unnatural tone. “What did she send him?” Then she added with the clairvoyance of passion: “Was it my money?”

“Edith,” muttered Jerome, “come home! Dear girl, you don't know what you're saying.”

“Let me alone! I'm going to get to the bottom of this at last. I'm sick of hiding things, and—and giving up everything for—for a man, only to have him *blame* me. There's just one question that I want to ask her.” She swept past Jerome's restraining arm and confronted the other woman. “Are you engaged to Howard?”

"Yes," said Miriam. She put out her hand in a gesture of quick compassion, but Edith evaded her touch.

"He told me," she said breathlessly, "that the engagement had been broken long ago." Then, as though the floodgates had been opened, she rushed on: "He wanted me to go away with him. Moral sense is a queer thing. You have it one way, but not another. I simply couldn't run and leave a lot of enormous bills behind for Chester to pay. He couldn't have, anyway; he's stony broke. So Howard brought me seven thousand dollars. I was to have paid up and gone away yesterday, and I seem to have upset his plans, somehow—but yesterday—oh, I had a *black* day! I couldn't decide anything. Today—well, Chester said something to me—and I made up my mind—to go. And—you know the rest."

There was a dead silence. It was like a chemical that is thrown into a seething mass, precipitating it. A great many things were finally settled in that brief hush.

Edith made a little sound that might have been a laugh in hell.

"Naturally, I shall not go anywhere to-day but home. As for the money that he gave me, I gave it to Miriam and she seems to have sent it back to him. Though how she knew that it was his I can't imagine. Or"—her scathing glance settled on Howard again—"are you in the habit of taking money from her?"

Without waiting for an answer she swept to the door. As Jerome hurried after her she made a gesture of impatient refusal.

"Just let me see you home," he said pleasantly. "My car is outside. I won't talk."

With a shrug she suffered his presence. They passed out together.

For a moment, the two left behind found nothing to say. Then Howard gulped out:

"Of course, you're done with me now."

"I was done with you in my heart this morning when you told me—about the money. But I didn't know it until later. That's why I'm taking this so simply. If I still loved you I should be heartbroken."

He turned away.

"How did you know that the money she gave you came from me?" he asked in a lower voice. "You see, when I heard that your father was coming home to-morrow—I only heard this morning, as you know—I thought that she had already gone away. I couldn't get it back from her in time, even if she hadn't spent part of it. Yes, let me make a clean breast of it! I was infatuated. You can't understand that. I had thought that by the time Mr. Gaines found out, I should be far enough away to be safe. But everything was changed by his sudden idea of returning. I had to put that money back. I came to you in desperation. But—how did you know the money she gave you was the same money?"

"I was sure," said Miriam with conviction.

"And you never let her suspect how I got it? That was—white of you."

"That was why I had to deny having received it. It seemed to me better to do that than to say: 'This is stolen money, and I'm going to see that it gets back to the rightful owner.' And I didn't want to accuse her of having taken it from you. I wanted," added Miriam simply, "to spare her feelings. It was a choice between explaining everything or else denying everything. It was a very pardonably pearl-gray lie."

"It was—" Howard's voice trailed away huskily. "I'm going away," he added after a moment. "No. All alone. I've written your father a letter resigning my job. Good-by, Miriam. You're the best and the kindest—

Will you shake hands?" he asked humbly.

Tears welled into her eyes. He gave both her hands a long, grateful clasp. As she heard his footsteps dying away in the hall, she pondered on the mystery of young love. Formerly that sound had been something apart, filling her with tremulous exaltation, making her deaf to the coming of a better man. Now, it was—footsteps. That was all.

Jerome found her at the window, tranquilly reading by the failing light. Having made sure that Edith was in the hands of her devoted maid, who was another victim of the "way," he had returned, driven by his lawyer's instinct for the psychological moment.

"I always prefer a nonsense book after a crisis," she observed, seeing him smile over her choice. "They are so much more reasonable than real life."

He read aloud, paraphrasing to taste:

"He gave it her, she gave it you,
You gave him that or more.
It all returned to You-know-who,
Exactly as before."

"How much do you know?" inquired Miriam.

"Nearly everything, I fancy. But you may fill the gaps if you like."

When she had done so, feeling that he had the right to know, he regarded her steadily, a queer smile twisting his singularly agreeable mouth.

"Didn't you realize that you were taking an awful chance?"

"No," said Miriam calmly. "I had an intuition that it was Dad's."

"Intuition, thy name is nerve!" declared Jerome. "If you're as nervy as that"—a tenseness came into his attitude, his tone of careful lightness deepened—"couldn't you take another chance, Miriam? I've been devoted to you for a long time, now—couldn't you care for me at all?"

Miriam considered him, a world of thought behind her brown gaze.

"I'm going to be perfectly truthful," she said. "Yes, I could. I'm not sure that I—don't. But it does seem so horrid, so fickle, to be engaged to two men in the same day."

"Very well," responded Jerome, slipping his arm through hers. "To-morrow I shall propose in form and you may accept me. In the meantime—" He felt his own heart pounding against her, and her slow, dark flush told him that she felt it, too. He threw his long-guarded reserve to the winds. With one impetuous movement he got her into his arms.

"I wonder," she said after a while, "whether it's wrong to be so happy when there is so much trouble in the world?"

Jerome laughed out, less at her words than at the delicious shyness of her voice, the note that only one kind of happiness brings.

"Wrong?" he ejaculated. "No, it's only natural!" Then he said seriously: "Miriam, will you promise me one thing?"

"Oh, yes," said Miriam.

"Then promise me that the next time, before you work out an intuition, you'll let me consult the statutes of this State. It might be safer."



AMERICANS recently bought the choicest of Dickens' manuscripts at the sale of the Burdett-Coutts library at Sotheby's. A Philadelphian purchased "The Haunted Man" and "The Ghost's Bargain" for sixteen thousand four hundred and sixty-five dollars. In the latter manuscript was a letter from Dickens to Miss Coutts explaining that he had taken great pains in the writing of it. It is considered one of the most important Dickens manuscripts that has been sold in London for many years.



The Kingmakers

By Burton E. Stevenson

Author of "Little Comrade,"
"A King in Babylon," etc.



WHAT HAPPENED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Selden, correspondent for the *London Times*, and notoriously indifferent to women, received an anonymous note summoning him to a rendezvous in the lounge of his hotel at Monte Carlo, and he yielded to a sudden desire to meet the writer, who proved to be an unusually attractive woman, the Countess Rémond. Selden learned, to his astonishment, that he had been the means of ridding the countess of a husband she hated. Count Rémond had been a spy during the war and Selden had stumbled upon the knowledge, reported to headquarters, and the count had met the fate of spies. Their conversation was interrupted by the sudden appearance of Baron Lappo—a friend of the countess and counselor of the banished King of Goriza—and Prince Danilo, the king's grandson. The throne of the Ghitas had been taken by Jeneski, a radical, who was making a republic of the little kingdom. The baron wanted to replace the old king on his throne and was planning to get the necessary money for the undertaking by arranging a marriage between Danilo and Mademoiselle Davis, the daughter of an American copper king whose wealth had been produced by the labor of the very men who were now ruling Goriza. But the prince was already married—morganatically—and the girl hesitated to reinstate the monarchy. As she had been influenced by Selden's glowing articles about the new republic, Baron Lappo was anxious to bring Selden to his own point of view, hoping through this to sway the girl. Later that same evening, Selden met the prince and Mademoiselle Davis' brother at the Sporting Club, where Lappo joined them, seeming annoyed at finding the prince with Davis. He went away with Danilo, leaving Davis and Selden together. While they were talking, two women spoke to Davis, and when they had gone Selden learned that the elder was Madame Ghita; the younger, her niece. He suddenly remembered that Ghita was the family name of the prince. Before he could question Davis further Lappo and the prince returned, and the baron invited Selden to a dinner on the following evening. They parted and Selden went to his room, pondering the extraordinary events of the evening. Innumerable questions surged in his mind, but he could find the answer to none of them. He felt that he had been drawn into an exciting drama, and its most interesting personage, to him, was—Madame Ghita.

CHAPTER VII.

MONTE CARLO, like all other pleasure resorts, has its inexorable routine, and the feature of the morning is a walk upon the terrace. This is followed by an apéritif and half an hour of gossip under a sunshade in front of the *Café de Paris*, these two items occupying the time pleasantly until lunch, when the day really commences.

The terrace pedestrians begin to

gather about half past ten, reach their densest an hour later, and then gradually thin away. To sit during that hour on one of the benches which face the walk is a rare privilege.

For the human stream is of never-ceasing interest. There is the nouveau riche and his family, not yet accustomed to the wealth the war showered upon them, ill at ease in their new clothes, glancing apprehensively at every one as though expecting an accusation

There are old roués of every nationality, hair plastered down—if there is any left—mustaches waxed to a point, great pouches under the eyes, ogling the women, especially the very young ones.

There is the stream of semiparalytics and neurasthenics flowing ceaselessly in and out of the hydropathic establishment at the end of the terrace, seeking relief from the results of overindulgence. There are fat Turks and lithe Greeks who glare at each other; tall Russians and little Italians who fraternize; as well as a scattering of all the nationalities, scarcely yet knowing their own names, created since the war over the breadth of Central Europe.

And then there are the women—the women who are the *raison d'être* for Monte Carlo and all resorts like it. It is to see the women, to permit them to exhibit themselves, that this morning parade takes place; it is to please the women the chefs in the great hotels labor; it is for them the orchestras play; it is to them the little expensive shops cater; it is for them the casino operates. And they are at their best, these women, on the terrace in the morning. The old ones are still in bed, the ugly ones shun the merciless morning light. Only the young and attractive venture to sally forth, and some of them are superb.

There are celebrities, too, of a sort, and decorations of every degree, from the grand rosette of the Legion down to the humble "*poireau*"; there are gray-bearded academicians, monocled diplomats, pallid artists, heavy-sterned generals, portly financiers. There is a Gargantuan concert singer, his hat pulled down over his eyes, his lithe little wife trotting beside him; there is a sallow statesman, not yet recovered from the shock of defeat, in close confab with some other exile.

There is a talented but enslaved diplomat with his ridiculous, fat mistress; there is a well-known nobleman with his next duchess. There

is the youthful tennis champion, fresh from her victories at *La Festa* and twittering like a sparrow to two tall worshipers in flannels; there is a great journalist, whose passion for play destroys him—these and a hundred others like them pass and repass, watch for a time the slaughter of pigeons going ceaselessly forward on the semicircle of lawn down near the water, and finally fade away.

Among this throng, Selden presently appeared in obedience to a command of the Countess Rémond, delivered to him that morning with his breakfast:

"I am in the mood for walking," she had written. "Please wait for me on the terrace."

So, since he had made up his mind to see the adventure through, here he was, walking up and down, looking at the crowd, and breathing deep drafts of the wonderful air. It was one of those exquisite mornings, bright and yet soft, which make the Riviera the most favored of winter resorts. There was a tang in the air which gave a fillip to the blood; the sea was of a deep and lustrous blue defying description, flecked here and there with whitecaps and dotted with the sails of a flotilla of little sloops engaged in a race. On the landward side, steep slopes, clad with vine and olive and dotted with white villas, rose up and up, until they culminated with a mighty rush in the rocky summit of the *Tête de Chien*, two thousand feet above.

A fairyland, a land of wonder and delight.

Selden turned from this loveliness and looked again at the people loitering past with a feeling of disgust. Was it for this crowd of parasites and voluptuaries that this superb corner of the world had been created? He had asked himself the same question once before as he sat in the dining saloon of a great new ship, homeward bound from Europe—was it merely to minister to the

pleasures of that crowd, and other crowds like it, that men had labored and sweated and died in the fabrication of that marvelous boat? What mockery, what waste! And then he had remembered the hundreds in the steerage—to them the ship was an ark, a sanctuary. It was bearing them to the land of freedom.

But here there was no such saving purpose; it was all mean, all sordid, compact of vanity and greed and sensuality.

Then, suddenly, his eyes saw the face they had been searching for, almost without his knowledge—the arresting and clever face of Madame Ghita. She, at least, had no reason to fear the light, nor had the glowing young Cicette who chattered beside her. Madame Ghita was listening and smiling as though to a child, oblivious of the glances she attracted, with that air of supreme poise which Selden had noted and admired the night before. Would she see him, he wondered, his heart accelerating its beat.

Yes, she saw him. Her eyes rested on his for an instant, and she gave him a gracious little nod of the head as she passed.

He was unreasonably elated—yet, why shouldn't she nod? Monte Carlo was not a formal place; besides, he had been of some little assistance to her the night before in interpreting her to Davis. It was almost an invitation—should he turn and intercept her? And then he caught himself up grimly; really, he told himself, he was behaving like a boy of twenty, rather than like an experienced and somewhat disillusioned man of thirty-four. What could Madame Ghita ever be to him? Nothing, of course! Just the same, he would like to know her—no harm in that!—she looked stimulating. Perhaps she would pass again.

He turned at the end of the terrace—to find himself face to face with the Countess Rémond.

"How you walk!" she gasped. "Like the wind. And how people have stared to see me pursuing you!"

"They must think me very fortunate!"

"Ah, well—yes!" She smiled. "But had you quite forgotten me?"

"Forgotten you! My dear countess!"

"Then you must have been composing a new article, to stalk along like that with your head down, looking neither to the right nor left."

"No," said Selden, as he fell into step beside her, "I was reflecting how ironical it is that the most beautiful spot on earth should be—what it is."

"But it is always like that," she pointed out. "Not only the pleasantest places, but the nicest things, belong to the people who least deserve them. You should write an article about it."

Selden laughed grimly.

"That was a savage shot!"

"What do you mean?"

"Right in my tenderest spot! Don't you suppose I know how futile it is—writing articles?"

"Is it futile?" she asked innocently.

"The most futile thing on earth! I ought to know. I've been doing it all my life, and it makes me sick to think of it. But don't talk about it—don't spoil this beautiful morning. How are we going to spend the day?"

"Suppose you suggest something," she said slyly.

"You said you were in the mood for walking—did you mean just walking here on the terrace?"

"Not in the least. I meant walking over the eternal hills. See, I am dressed for it." She held out for his inspection a slender foot shod sensibly—at least, not too foolishly.

"And I may have—how much time?"

"Until five o'clock," smiled the countess.

Selden was conscious that Madame Ghita and her companion had turned at the other end of the terrace and were

coming back, but he kept his attention riveted on his companion—even, to his own ironic amusement, simulated an ardor he did not feel, and which caused her to rest curious eyes upon him.

"That is perfectly splendid!" he cried. "We will go up to La Turbie, have lunch, walk along the Grande Corniche to Eze—do you know Eze?"

"No. Is it a town?"

"Yes—a gem. And we will sit there and look at it, and when we are quite ready, a car will bring us back. Will that suit you?"

"It will be lovely!" She permitted her eyes to caress him the merest bit. "But I would point out that it is I who am taking your time, not you mine. If you have something else to do—"

"Nonsense!" Selden broke in. "I may be an American, but I don't work all the time! Come along!"

As they turned toward the steps, a bulky male figure suddenly loomed in front of them.

"Oh, how do you do?" said the countess, and then Selden saw that the man with whom she was shaking hands was John Halsey, who had been Paris correspondent of the London *Journal* for time immemorial. "Do you know Mr. Selden, Mr. Halsey?"

"Selden?" echoed Halsey, who up to that moment had not looked at him. "Oh, hello, Selden. I thought you were somewhere in the Balkans."

He didn't offer to shake hands and there was something faintly hostile about him.

"No, I'm here," said Selden briefly, wondering if it was possible that Halsey was jealous, or if it was just his manner.

But Halsey had already turned back to the countess.

"I have been looking for you everywhere," he said. "I got in just a few minutes ago and they told me at the hotel that you had gone out. I want

you to come to lunch with me. We must have a talk."

There was something in his air at the same time bullying and cringing—like a tiger conscious of his strength, but chilled to the bone at sight of the trainer's whip.

"I am sorry," said the countess, "but I have an engagement."

"With whom?"

"Mr. Selden and I are going to have lunch at La Turbie," she explained sweetly, but there was a dangerous light in her eyes.

Halsey started to say something, but saw the light and checked himself.

"Dinner, then?" he asked.

"No, I am engaged for dinner, also. But I shall be back at five. Call me up." She nodded curtly and turned definitely away.

Selden, glancing back as they mounted the steps together, saw that Halsey was still standing there, hat in hand, staring after them with a look anything but pleasant. Yes, the fool must be jealous; but even then he had no right to speak to the countess as he had. However, he wasn't going to waste any time over Halsey, and he put him definitely out of his mind.

He stopped a second at the hotel to order a car sent on to Eze, and ten minutes later they were in the funicular, and its little engine was puffing and panting as it pushed them steeply upward toward La Turbie, with Monaco and the serrated coast opening out superbly below.

The carriage was filled with tweed-clad English on their way to the golf course on Mont Agel, and the feminine members of the party regarded Selden and his companion with evident distrust, as of another world, while the men seemed loftily unaware of their existence. Selden smiled as he watched the party draw together in a compact mass, as if scenting danger.

As he glanced at his companion he

saw that she was smiling, too, though it might have been with pleasure at the magnificent panorama opening below.

For the first time that morning he had the chance to take a really good look at her. She had no reason to fear the light, though there was nothing girlish about her; indeed, she looked a little older than she had the night before—thirty, perhaps. Every line of her face bespoke the mature woman of the world, but the flesh was smooth and firm, the eyes unshadowed, the lips fresh and rounding upward a little at the corners.

It was not so arresting as when he had first seen it—that quality had, perhaps, been due to art—but it was still unusual, with a suggestion of the unplumbed and unfamiliar, of age-old jealousies and intrigues and ambitions. It had race, as distinguished from ancestry. In fact, Selden doubted if there was any ancestry—that was one of the things she would tell him. For he was determined now that he would have her story—and not only her own, but Lappo's and Danilo's. He knew exactly where he was going to take her to unfold it, and exactly what he was going to say.

She felt his eyes upon her face, glanced at him, smiled, and looked away again. And presently the engine shrieked and panted to a stop, and they clambered out.

Sixteen hundred feet below them Monaco lay glittering in the sun, while to right and left stretched the indented coast, from the Chersonese beyond Beaulieu to Bordighera and the Italian hills, with the blue, blue sea mounting to an horizon which seemed gray by contrast—a panorama which, perhaps, is equaled nowhere on earth.

It still lay below them as they sat at lunch on the terrace of the hotel, and talked, by tacit consent, of indifferent things. And presently he had bought her an iron-tipped cane, and they were setting forth through the little town.

La Turbie is one of those old, old villages built ages ago along this coast high in the mountain fastnesses for safety from the Barbary corsairs and the miscellaneous pirates who roamed up and down the Mediterranean, raiding and sacking and seeking what they might devour. It was captured by the Romans two thousand years ago, and is overshadowed by the ruins of a great stone tower which Augustus set up to commemorate the victory. Its narrow streets and dingy, rubble houses have come unchanged through the ages, and are still inhabited by the descendants of the old tribes the Romans conquered, following the same trades in the same way, and living the same lives.

Except that now they must dodge the motor cars which flash ceaselessly through the town along the Grande Corniche. Strangest contrast of the ages, the silken, jeweled femme du monde who glances out carelessly at the rough-clad, red-faced girl pushing a barrow of manure to the fields. And what thought stirs the girl's brain as she gazes after the vanishing car?

"Perhaps no thought at all," said the countess, when Selden put this question to her. "Don't make the mistake of endowing the peasantry with your own mentality, as so many reformers do."

"I don't. And I'm not a reformer," he protested. "Just the same, I suppose they have some feelings."

"Their feelings are centered in their stomachs. Give them a full stomach and they are happy."

"You talk like Baron Lappo."

"Do I? Well, the baron is a very clever man, and he understands the peasantry. Nine tenths of the people of his country are peasants. Americans can't understand them because America hasn't any peasants. And so you credit them with noble aspirations—patriotism, liberty!—whereas all they really seek is enough to eat."

"I suppose," said Selden, "that you are referring to those articles of mine which annoyed the baron."

"Yes, I am. I think them altogether mistaken. I admire your optimism, but it carries you too far."

Selden glanced at her curiously. He was surprised that she should speak so seriously.

"According to your idea," he said, "the best government is the one which gives its people the most to eat for the least return in labor."

"Yes, you put it very well. That is it exactly. How can one believe anything else?"

Selden turned the idea over in his head.

"The best government, undoubtedly," he agreed, "is the one that gives every man a square deal."

"Yes."

"And that is where the old despotisms failed. They exploited the people for their own benefit."

"It is where every government fails. The people are always exploited for somebody's benefit."

"At least, they have swept away the despotisms—not one is left standing in the length and breadth of Europe. That is why I think Europe—war torn, bankrupt, disordered as she is—is still better off to-day than she has ever been, because for the first time in history her people are free."

"But they are not free," protested the countess impatiently. "They are still slaves to their stomachs—more than ever, indeed, since food is more difficult to get. It is absurd to call them free. What is freedom worth to a starving man? He prefers food. And he must always have a master."

"At least, he can choose his master."

"But not at all. The peasant can never choose his master. Do you imagine the Russian peasant chose Lenin?"

"No, of course not."

"Or that the peasants of my own country chose Jeneski?"

There was something in her voice, a strange vibrancy, as she uttered the name, which made him look at her. She was gazing straight ahead, her nostrils distended with passion, her lips quivering—and then, suddenly, her face changed and she threw up her hand with a little cry.

"Ah, look there!"

They had come to a turn in the road—that marvelous road, so wide, so perfect, hung miraculously against the mountainside, one of Napoleon's masterpieces—and below them lay the village of Eze, unaltered since the Dark Ages.

Its founders, whoever they were, must have had the fear of pirates driven deep into their souls; perhaps they came from a town which had been stormed and looted, and were resolved to run no risk the second time. So they had chosen for their new abode the top of a precipitous pinnacle, unapproachable on any side save one, and almost unapproachable on that. With unimaginable labor they had contrived a village there, half dug from the rock, half built of the rock fragments. At the extreme summit they had reared a great citadel, as a last refuge if the town was stormed, and around the whole they had flung a heavy wall pierced by a single gate, flanked with defending towers.

So well they built, so solidly, that the town still stands as it has stood for twenty centuries, the wonder of the twentieth. Only the citadel, no longer needed with the passing of the sea robber, has fallen into ruin and been despoiled for the repair of the other houses.

Selden and the countess stood spellbound, gazing down upon it and upon the marvelous background against which it stood silhouetted—a background of hill and water and curving coast. Then by a common impulse, they turned into a bypath, and started to clamber down

toward it through the vineyards and olive groves, past little houses, to the highway—the Lower Corniche—which runs at the foot of the summit upon which Eze stands; then up again along a steep and narrow road, through the gateway, past the frowning walls, around the little church, and between the dismal houses, scrambling up and up, until they came out upon what had been the floor of the donjon, but was now a wide platform open to the sky.

And as they looked around, it seemed that the whole world lay at their feet.

At one side of the platform, facing the sea, stood a rude bench.

"Let us sit down," said Selden, then got out his pipe, filled it deliberately, lighted it, and took a long puff. "Now," he added, "I am ready for the story."

CHAPTER VIII.

For a moment the Countess Rémond did not speak, and Selden could see that her thoughts were turned inward, as though seeking some starting point, some end to get hold of in the unraveling of a tangled web. He did not suspect that, realizing her moment was at hand, she was gathering her forces to meet it and casting a final glance over her plan of campaign.

"Why did you send for me last night?" he prompted.

"I wanted to thank you."

"Yes, but there was something else."

"I was going to implore your assistance in saving a people's freedom," she answered, smiling as if at her own impulsiveness.

"And you no longer need it?"

"I no longer believe their freedom is in danger."

"You are speaking of your own people, of course."

"Yes."

"You mean, then, that this new plot

of Lappo's, whatever it is, will come to nothing?"

"No, he will succeed and the country will be better off."

"He told you last night what his plans are?"

"Yes—some of them."

"He expects, of course, to put the king back?"

"Of course."

"It is difficult to take the king seriously," said Selden. "He has always been a sort of comic-opera king, posing as the primitive chieftain of a splendid, primitive race."

"Perhaps it wasn't a pose," the countess suggested.

"Perhaps not—but one can't help suspecting a man with such a genius for publicity. And he was not always primitive. He was the cleverest intriguer in Europe; even in the war he tried to be on both sides at once."

"Because he wanted to save his country. How can one serve a little country like that except by intrigue?"

Selden took a few reflective puffs.

"Well, I don't know," he said at last. "I've never met him, so perhaps I'm prejudiced. But I do know this—while he was on the throne, the country was absolutely his to do as he pleased with. He was good-natured, democratic, interested in his people—even Jeneski admits that—but he had his evil moments when frightful injustices were done. Anybody who disagreed with him was exiled. But the principal vice of the whole system was that the people had absolutely no voice in their government."

"How much voice have they now?" inquired the countess.

"Not much, I grant you, because they're too ignorant. But as they grow more fit, they'll take a larger and larger part."

"Perhaps—if they don't starve meanwhile."

"Anyway," added Selden, "it isn't

merely a question of the old king. Nobody would object if he could gather up a few millions somewhere and go back and spend them on his country. But he won't live long, and then it will be a question of Danilo. What about him? Is he the sort of man to save a country from starvation?"

"He would have Lappo," pointed out the countess.

"It's a shame," mused Selden, "that Lappo can't work with Jeneski. What a team that would make!"

"But he can't!" said the countess. "He would consider himself a traitor."

Selden nodded.

"Yes, I know."

The two fell silent, gazing thoughtfully out over the sea.

"You have told me nothing about yourself," he said at last.

"Do you want to know?" She cast him a quick glance.

"I can't help wondering—"

"About that man you discovered signaling to the Germans?"

Selden nodded, without looking at her.

"That man was Lappo's son," said the countess.

Selden stared.

"Lappo's son?"

"The son of a woman he loved very much. He had made a state marriage—a very unhappy one—and had a legitimate son, so he could not acknowledge the other. But he got for him a little estate and the courtesy title of Count Rémond. Afterward he had reason to be glad he had not acknowledged him, for Rémond's mother died, and he developed a streak of madness, got into some frightful scrapes and was finally sent to America. Practically all our people in America had settled in one place—at a little town in Montana where there was a great copper mine. Rémond came there. We met 'each other and—were married. He was not without fascination of a sort—and I

was very young. Then came the war, and Rémond was soon traveling about the country in what he told me was the Allies' secret service. I saw him very seldom. When America entered the war, he enlisted. I was very proud of him. I never suspected what he was really doing until I heard—"

"But how could you hear?" asked Selden. "It was a military secret."

"The baron found out. He had sources of information."

"Then he knows—"

"That you were the one who denounced Rémond? But of course!"

Selden involuntarily glanced behind him.

"Oh, do not fear!" said the countess with a smile. "He is glad the traitor was caught so soon. He may even speak to you about it."

Yes, that would be like the baron! Here, then, was one of the skeletons concealed in his private closet! Selden wondered how many more there were.

"Well," he said at last, "and afterward?"

"Afterward"—the countess paused an instant—"afterward the baron was very kind to me. He sent me money, he invited me to place myself under his protection—but he himself was soon an exile, for the Austrians overran the country, and he had time to think only of his king. So it was not until Jeneski came back that I could return."

"You came with Jeneski?" asked Selden curiously, wondering what the baron had thought of that.

The countess nodded, her lip caught between her teeth.

"He and my father had been dear friends," she explained. "When my father died, Jeneski in a way adopted me. So he took me back with him, and succeeded in having my little estate restored to me."

A very seductive adopted daughter, Selden thought; a rather disturbing one. The countess' story had rung true

up to this point, but here it was not quite convincing.

"The estate—it is an attractive one, I hope?" he queried.

"It is not bad—but I could not stay there." The note of passion was in her voice again, and her hands were clenched. "It was impossible. I could not do it. So I came away to Paris—to Monte Carlo—to amuse myself—to forget!"

"One can amuse one's self better here, it is true," Selden agreed, searching for a clew to her emotion. "But weren't you interested in seeing how Jeneski's experiment worked out?"

"Jeneski?" she repeated hoarsely. "Ah, you do not know him! He is not a man—he is a machine which crushes people who get in his way. He—"

She stopped abruptly, struggling for self-control.

"Yes," said Selden. "I suppose all fanatics are more or less like that."

"I have known some who were human," said the countess more quietly, and closed her lips tightly, as though determined to say no more.

Selden could only ponder what she meant. How had she got in his way? What had he done to her? To him Jeneski had seemed very human—possessed by his idea, of course, ready to make for it any sacrifice; but full of fire, of sympathy, of understanding. Full of passion, too, unless his full red lips belied him.

"However," the countess was saying, "we need not concern ourselves about Jeneski. He will soon be replaced."

"I am not so sure of it."

"Baron Lappo is sure of it. I do not think you understand, Mr. Selden, what an extraordinary man the baron is. Nothing is concealed from him. He is in his way a great artist."

"I hope to know him better," Selden observed.

"And the king—he is not at all what you think. But you will see!"

"Yes, the baron has promised to arrange an interview."

"It will be to-night. The baron is giving a dinner."

"How did you know?" asked Selden, looking at her in some astonishment.

"I am to be there. You, also, are invited, are you not?"

"Yes."

"Well, you can make your observations! I advise you to keep your eyes very wide open."

Selden rubbed a reflective hand across his forehead.

"I confess," he said, "that these intrigues are too finespun for my intelligence. I don't seem to be able to find the key. However, I shall do my best. I don't suppose you can tell me any more?"

"Only in confidence. You wouldn't want that."

"No," agreed Selden slowly, "I wouldn't want that. I must be free to use whatever I find out, if I think it necessary."

"I understand, and you are right." She nodded, and glanced at her watch. "Come, we must be going. This dinner is a most important one for me. I must dress for it carefully."

"Do you know who will be there?"

"The king, Danilo, Lappo, yourself, myself, and—two or three other women."

"Madame Ghita, perhaps?" hazarded Selden, and watched her face.

She could not repress a little start.

"You know Madame Ghita?"

"She was inquiring for the prince at the Sporting Club last night. I happened to hear her."

"Ah!" said the countess. "Then, of course, you can guess who she is!"

"Yes, I suppose so," said Selden slowly, with a little sinking of the heart. He had hoped against hope that there might be some other explanation. Ah, well, if she were Danilo's mistress that ended it.

The countess was looking at him curiously.

"Then you know perfectly well that she would not be at the dinner to-night. Were you setting a trap of some sort?"

"No—but I wondered who she was. I wasn't sure."

"Well, you are now," she said, holding out her hand to him, and he helped her down the rocky descent to the town. She permitted herself to lean against him once or twice, but he was too preoccupied to notice. Madame Ghita—the mistress of the prince!

The countess looked at him occasionally, trying to read his thoughts, but she did not speak again until they were seated in the motor car which was awaiting them.

"You saw the prince last night?" she asked.

"Yes, I went over to the Sporting Club after I finished my work. The prince was playing."

"And losing, of course?"

"No, he was winning heavily. He must have won two hundred thousand francs."

"Was he alone?"

"No, there was a young fellow named Davis with him."

"An American?"

"Yes—obviously."

"So, it was from him he got the money!" she murmured, half to herself.

"I suppose so," laughed Selden. "Do you know him?"

"No, I have never met him."

"He is very young and callow, but I fancy he will get plenty of experience before long. First from the prince, and then from a girl who has him in her net."

"Did the baron see him?"

"Oh, yes. He seemed to know him quite well."

"And he was very much annoyed, was he not?"

Selden looked at her.

"How did you know that?"

7—Ains.

"Oh, I guessed it! But go ahead and tell me what happened."

"The principal thing that happened," said Selden, laughing a little at the recollection, "was that the baron made the prince repay the money he had borrowed—a considerable sum. The prince was very cross."

"He would be!" nodded the countess. "He has always found more amusing uses for his money than paying his debts with it. It must have been a new experience! But in this case, it was necessary," she added thoughtfully.

"I am glad you understand it so well," said Selden dryly.

The countess laughed and tapped his hand playfully.

"Don't be cross," she said. "You will find it much more amusing to piece together the puzzle for yourself. And I am sure you will find the key at the dinner to-night!"

"I am not cross; I am only wondering if I shall see you to-morrow."

She glanced at him from under lowered lashes.

"If you wish," she said softly.

He moved a little nearer to her. Since Madame Ghita was unattainable, and this amusement offered—

"When will you be free?" he asked.

"All day."

"Shall we say dinner, then, at Ciro's?"

"That will be lovely."

"Thank you," said Selden. "You are being very good to me!"

"Ah, I have a good heart!" she laughed. "And perhaps I have some secret reason!"

They were speeding down the slope into the Condamine, when another motor panted past them so rapidly that Selden caught but a glimpse of its occupants. But his companion's eyes had been quicker.

"Did you see who that was?" she asked.

"No."

"It was Madame Ghita. And this is the road to Nice."

"What of it?"

"But it is at Nice the dinner is to take place!" cried the countess. "Surely, you are not so stupid as you seem!"

Selden could only look at her. Suddenly the car jerked to a stop.

"Here we are," she said. "Till tonight—and thank you for a delightful afternoon!"

And she ran quickly up the steps into the hotel.

CHAPTER IX.

Selden dressed for dinner that evening with the same sense of nervous tension that he used to feel in the old days when tumbling out of bed and hustling into his clothes in the middle of the night to witness the beginning of a big offensive. He had found a note from the baron awaiting him, naming eight-thirty as the hour and the Villa Gloria on the Promenade des Anglais as the place, and expressing great pleasure that Selden was to be among the guests. Its perfect wording awakened in Selden fresh admiration for the supreme finish of the old diplomat, who was never at fault for the right word, the right look, the right gesture.

And presently, alone in a compartment of the express which hurtled through innumerable tunnels toward Nice, he had settled himself in a corner and endeavored to draw such deductions as were possible from his afternoon's conversation with the countess, and to decide how much of it was grist for his mill.

There was a plot, it seemed, to get the old king back on the throne. But that was nothing new. There had always been such a plot, ever since the day when the king and his family and a few adherents had been forced to flee the country. Hitherto, it had gathered

to a head whenever the king was in extraordinary need of funds, and had faded away again as soon as the funds were secured from some too-credulous speculator.

But this time it seemed to be unusually serious and involved, so the baron had hinted, not only the restoration of the king, but the financing of the country. Heaven knows, it needed financing, and no doubt the baron was right—the king would be welcomed back with open arms, if only he brought some money with him. There was no doubt that he had won an immense personal popularity during his half century of power. Most of his subjects had never known any other ruler, and probably wanted no other. He had mixed with them as a father with his children—an old-world father, of course, whose word was law.

He had lived in a state of patriarchal simplicity, carefully contrived and adroitly advertised, so that the peasant woman baked her bread with the peasant consciousness that the queen baked hers, also; and when some shopkeeper or petty farmer compared the time with the king in the public square of the capital, he saw that the king's watch was of brass like his own. When he went to the bank to make a little deposit, he was as likely as not to encounter the king there, also putting aside a portion of his savings.

Moreover, this farseeing monarch had not relied on popular prestige alone, but had further strengthened his position by marrying his ten children into most of the courts of Europe. For his eldest son he had chosen a Hohenzollern princess; his eldest daughter was now queen of a dominion far larger than her father's; two other daughters had captured Russian grand dukes; and a strange turn of fortune, combined with a bloody tragedy, had brought a grandson to a throne.

So, if any king could be safe, he had

seemed to be—and yet all these safeguards had been swept away by the World War. The passion for democracy which emerged from it had decreed that kings must go, and Pietro had found himself cast aside with all the others. But a revulsion had already begun; the feeling was growing that an ordered government, however despotic, was better than a disordered one, however ideal in theory; and kings and princes, exiled in Switzerland or Holland or along the Riviera, were beginning to pick up heart of hope and gather their partisans about them.

Yet, Selden told himself, sitting there and turning all this over in his mind, despite the fact that this revulsion was being sedulously fostered by financiers and aristocrats and every one else who had been despoiled of money or power by the new order, there was not the slightest hope for any of them, except perhaps for this one canny old patriarch—if he could get hold of enough money to organize an opposition and carry on a campaign. No doubt, many of his mountaineers thought he was still ruling over them!

The train creaked to a stop under the great, glass-roofed shed at Nice, and Selden clambered down to the platform and made his way through the exit to the street. He saw that it was only a minute or two past eight, so he drew his coat about him and started to walk.

For the first time since the outbreak of the war, Nice was experiencing a really prosperous season, and it had gone to the head of that mercurial city. The newly named Avenue des Victoires hummed with traffic, the sidewalks were crowded with chattering people, happy again in having a host of strangers to despoil. The gorgeous shops on either side were a blaze of light, with their choicest wares displayed in their windows. They were devoted almost entirely to articles de luxe, and they seemed to Selden, as he

glanced into them, more luxurious and far more expensive than ever.

Where the money came from no one knew, but far vaster sums than ever before were being frittered away on articles of vanity and personal adornment. The wealth of the world seemed to have passed suddenly into the hands of women, who were flinging it recklessly to right and left. The season at Deauville had been marked by an extravagance wild beyond parallel, by such gambling as the world had never seen. Now it was here, along the Riviera, that the orgy was continued. And not here only, as he well knew, but in Paris, London, Brussels, Berlin—yes, even in Vienna and Budapest and Warsaw, before the eyes of starving spectators—the dance whirled on.

Thoughtful men looked on aghast, but no one was wise enough to foretell how or when it would end. That the end would be disaster Selden did not for a moment doubt.

The crowds in the street had delayed him a little, so at the Place Masséna he called a cab and gave the driver the address. In a moment they were clattering along the Promenade des Anglais, before a row of stately white villas and great hotels, looking out across the wide cement promenade upon the magic sea which stretched away to the horizon.

The Villa Gloria proved to be one of the most imposing of these edifices, with entrance barred by high iron gates, which were passed only after Selden had given his name and it had been duly checked upon a list in the hands of the concierge, who took a good look at him, evidently suspicious of any one arriving in a public cab. The establishment was plainly an elaborate one—maintained, so gossip said, from the private purse of the daughter who still retained a throne.

His hat and coat were taken from him by a bearded functionary in the native costume—which, to American

eyes, savors so much of the bull ring!—and another led the way up the wide stairs, opened a door and announced him.

The room he entered was evidently the salon, but it was deserted except for the Baron Lappo, who was hastening forward across its empty spaces. Selden, rather taken aback, wondered uneasily if he could have mistaken the hour, but if he had, there was no sign of it in the baron's greeting.

"It is a great pleasure to see you again," he was saying. "I have spoken of you to the king, and he is most desirous of meeting you. I shall take you to him at once."

Selden murmured his thanks and followed the baron down the length of the long room to a door at the other end. The baron knocked and, a voice bidding him enter, opened the door and motioned Selden to precede him. Stepping through, Selden found himself in a little room, blue with tobacco smoke, which was evidently the king's work cabinet. An imposing figure was seated at a desk near the window, and a secretary with a sheaf of papers was just making his escape through an opposite door.

Lappo led him forward.

"This is Monsieur Selden, your majesty," he said.

The figure at the desk rose to its feet—an impressive height.

"I am glad to meet you, sir," said the king, in excellent English. "I have heard much of you and congratulate you upon your brilliant achievements."

Selden, considerably abashed by this greeting, had the impression that he was shaking hands with an institution rather than with a man—the institution of royalty. He murmured something and sat down, in obedience to the king's gesture. The king also reseated himself, his chair creaking loudly, but the baron remained standing.

Selden had seen a good many kings

in the course of his career, but none who looked the part as this one did. The tall and dignified King of the Belgians was the closest second, but he lacked the picturesqueness, the air of mastery and profundity, which marked this old man. He sat there as though he ruled the world; he imposed himself.

He wore, as always, the costume of his country, rich and colorful with embroidery, and for head covering a flat, round, brimless cap of blood-red satin, with his arms in gold upon its front. It oddly became his dark, semi-Oriental countenance, with its hawk nose, its grizzled mustache drooping on either side of the full lips, and its deeply cleft chin. But the eyes impressed Selden most. They were very dark and very large, and had a peculiar cast, or lack of focus, which gave them the effect of looking not at one, but into and through one and out on the other side, distinctly disconcerting until one grew used to it. Indeed, just at first, Selden had the impression that the king was gazing fixedly at some one behind him. "I hope you will not mind," went on the king, "if I speak in French. I speak in English, it is true, and I have insisted that all my children should learn that language, though I regret to say that some of them forgot, as they forgot other of my teachings, after they left my house. But I have not in it the precision which I have in French."

"It astonishes me, sir, that you speak English so well," said Selden. "I found very few people in the Balkans who could speak it at all, unless they had lived in America."

"Ah, monsieur," said the king, a little sadly, "when one's kingdom is so small that from its center one can see almost to its borders, and when beyond those borders are age-old enemies searching ceaselessly for an avenue of attack, one must take care to neglect nothing—it was necessary that I strengthen myself wherever possible by alliances. So my

children were taught many languages, English among them, and, since I could not permit them to be wiser than their father, I was forced to learn these languages, too, though of course I learned them much less readily.

"But the effort they cost me has been many times repaid by the ability it gave me to converse with men of many nations, and to read many things of which, otherwise, I should have been ignorant—your interesting articles upon my country, for example, and upon Austria and Central Europe in general. I congratulate you again upon them—their point of view is not always mine, but I can see that they have been based upon an accuracy of observation and breadth of sympathy altogether unusual. Will you have a cigarette? No? Tobacco is my one dissipation—I am getting too old for any other."

He took a fat Turkish cigarette from a case on his desk, lighted it carefully, and blew an immense gust of smoke toward the ceiling.

"When my good Lappo told me this morning of having met you yesterday," he went on, "and suggested that you be asked this evening half an hour in advance of the other guests, I thought it a most happy idea. Lappo has many happy ideas"—he smiled at the baron—"I should be lost without him. Having read your articles, I welcomed the opportunity to explain to you something of my point of view. It is no secret that I am trying to regain my kingdom, of which I have been unjustly deprived. I shall continue to try until I succeed, or until I die. It is a point of honor with me. But you would not be sympathetic toward such a restoration, is it not so?"

"It seems to me, sir," Selden answered, "that the republican form of government is best for any people, because it opens the way for opportunity and self-development. And I do not believe in the hereditary right to rule—

to dispose of people's lives and fortunes, and to control their happiness."

"I do not see," said the king, "that the hereditary right to rule differs in principle from the hereditary right to property. Because this right is sometimes abused, you would not abolish it altogether?"

"No," said Selden, "I have not yet got quite as far as communism. But I think hereditary fortunes—all wealth, indeed—should be limited and controlled."

"So should the hereditary right to rule be limited and controlled—as it is in England, perhaps. Ah, I can see what you are thinking," added the king, with a smile. "You are thinking that deposed monarchs are always democrats; that I am a new convert to this idea—but there you are wrong. I gave my people a constitution long ago. It was not as liberal as England's, true; but one can not scale a mountain at a single bound. One must climb step by step. Even republics are not always perfect!"

"Oh, they never are!" Selden agreed. "They sometimes do disgraceful things—unaccountable things! But however ignorant and selfish they may appear, they are, nevertheless, a step forward toward the liberation of mankind."

"Perhaps so. But I repeat that it may sometimes be too long a step to take safely all at once. My argument, monsieur, is this: One cannot suddenly give complete liberty to a people who for centuries have been accustomed to guidance and control, without running the risk of very grave disaster. Civilization is the result of people working together, of a vast coördination. When government fails, and the people fall apart into little groups, each working for itself, civilization fails, too. Rather than take such a risk, the wise man proceeds slowly and with caution—he seeks to lead the people upward gradually."

"That is true, sir," agreed Selden. "The trouble is that in the past they have often not been led upward at all, but kept down in the mud at the bottom of the pit by the fear and the greed of their rulers. If they have progressed, it has been in spite of their rulers."

"In the past, perhaps; not in the future. That day, monsieur, will never return. The war has liberated the world from slavery to old forms and old ideas."

"I believe so, with all my heart," said Selden. "Our task is to keep it from sliding back again."

"But the war was not able to make men wise all at once," said the king. "So we must also take care not to become the slaves of new ideas which are worse than the old ones, or which are really only the old ones cleverly disguised with a new name. There will always be in the world, monsieur, men who seek wealth and power for unscrupulous and selfish ends. As I look about me at the present state of Europe, I fear sometimes that it is falling into the hands of such men. I fear—"

There was a tap at the door. The king glanced at a little clock on his desk.

"The other guests are arriving," he said, and rose. "I have enjoyed our talk very much, Monsieur Selden, and especially your frankness. We must continue it some time. Meanwhile, I confide you to the good Lappo." He bowed with the most engaging cordiality.

CHAPTER X.

Selden was conscious of a distinct liking and admiration for the old monarch as he watched him hasten forward to meet the new arrivals, two women and a man.

"It is Monsieur Davis, with his mother and his sister," explained the baron, who had remained behind a

moment until the king's greetings were over.

Selden saw with some astonishment that it was indeed the same young Davis whom he had met at the Sporting Club the night before. Why should the king invite these Americans to dinner? And especially why should he welcome them so warmly? Why should he pat Miss Davis' hand as though he were her father? What was the meaning of the baron's faultless deference? Who were these Davises, anyway?

These questions flashed through his head in the moment during which the king bent over the hands of the ladies and inquired solicitously about their health. Then it was the baron's turn; and then Davis turned and saw Selden.

"Why, hello!" he said, and came over and shook hands. "Sis will be tickled to death to see you."

"Yes," said the king, whom nothing escaped, and who had evidently been coached by his good Lappo, "I felt certain that Miss Davis would be glad to meet a so distinguished countryman—and you, also, madame." He brought Selden forward and introduced him.

The elder woman surveyed him through her lorgnette, evidently wondering who he was, and her greeting was perfunctory in the extreme, but when he shook hands with her daughter, he found himself looking into a pair of eyes fairly dancing with excitement.

"Yes, indeed," she said, "I am glad to meet you. Your articles seem to me perfectly wonderful. I have read them all."

"That is a great compliment," said Selden, laughing a little at her enthusiasm. "I doubt if there is any one else who has read them all! You are interested in politics, then?"

"Oh, there was much more than politics—but I liked them especially because they were so—so optimistic!"

The baron had drawn near and was listening smilingly.

"Too much so, perhaps," said Selden, with a glance at him. "That, at least, is the opinion of the baron."

"No, no! You do me wrong!" protested the baron. "I think merely that there is a safer road up the mountain than the one you indicate—at least up the mountains of my country, which is very mountainous indeed!"

"And perhaps you are right, monsieur," agreed Selden amiably.

Miss Davis had been listening with an intensity which puzzled him.

"I want to be quite sure that I understand," she said. "Baron Lappo and I have talked a great deal about your point of view. His idea is that the old régime could do much more for his country than is possible under the new one."

"If the old régime adopted some new ideas, and could arrange to finance the country, he is probably right," Selden conceded.

"Ah, mademoiselle, you see!" cried the baron, obviously elated. "It is as I told you! But come, the king has something to say to you."

What the king had to say seemed of a semiconfidential, not to say romantic, nature; at least, Miss Davis laughed and blushed and shook her head. Left to himself for a moment, Selden had an opportunity to examine the two women.

As for the mother, her origin, character and ambitions were written large all over her—in her plump face with its insignificant features and bright little eyes like a bird's; in the voice, too loud and not quite sure of its grammar; in the gown, too elaborate, and the jewels, too abundant—a woman who had once, no doubt, been a good sort with a certain dignity and genuineness, but who had been spoiled by prosperity and also, perhaps, by a careless and too-indulgent husband—an American husband.

The boy was curiously like her, but

the daughter was of a different and much finer type, and Selden guessed that she carried on the father's strain. Not strikingly beautiful, but fresh-skinned and wholesome, with a face delicately chiseled and touched just the slightest, when in repose, by sadness or disillusion—just a little too old and too reserved for its years; in this respect more of Europe than of America. Perhaps it was the mother who had disillusioned her.

But why should the king listen to them both with such attention? Why should the baron be so deferential? Could it be possible that these people had something to do with the plot?

The baron, seeing Selden standing alone, managed to guide him back to Mrs. Davis, whose cool greeting he had noted, and for which he proceeded at once to atone.

"It is not often we have with us men of such wide influence as Monsieur Selden," he began.

"The baron exaggerates," Selden hastened to assure her. "I am just a newspaper man, Mrs. Davis."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Davis, using her lorgnette again. Her experiences with newspaper men had not always been fortunate, and she distrusted them.

"But a newspaper man, as you call it, the most distinguished," the baron persisted. "Perhaps you have heard your daughter and myself discussing some of his theories."

"Perhaps I have," she agreed uncertainly.

"Monsieur Selden is a democrat the most pronounced," went on the baron, no whit discouraged, "but we are trying to convince him that a monarchy is not so bad."

"I am sure there is little to be said for democracies," said Mrs. Davis severely, as one lecturing a small child, "when one sees their horrible blunders. And such men!"

"They do blunder," Selden agreed,

"but at least it is their own blunders they suffer from, so there is a sort of poetic justice in it."

"No, it is other people who suffer," said Mrs. Davis. "They rob every one. When I think that my income tax this year—"

She was interrupted by the announcement of the Countess Rémond, and was instantly so absorbed in contemplation of that unusual woman that she quite forgot to go on.

The Countess Rémond had said that she was going to dress with care, but Selden had foreseen no such finished perfection, and moreover it was at once apparent that she was as much at home in a king's drawing-room as in any other. Nothing could have been more correct, more perfect, than the way she acknowledged the introduction to the king which the baron made.

The king himself regarded her with an appreciative eye—for he had always been a connoisseur of women—holding her hand the tiniest fraction of a second longer than was necessary, and he took advantage of the moment when the baron was continuing the introductions to motion the major-domo to him and give him some brief instructions in an undertone. As that solemn functionary bowed and hastened away, Selden guessed that the king had suddenly decided upon a rearrangement of the places at table.

The way in which the countess greeted the ladies was also a work of art, it was so charming, so cordial, so gracious, without a trace of that arrogance which—alas!—too often marks the bearing of ladies of the Old World toward ladies of the New, and which, indeed, one might well expect of a countess. Her indifference to the men was almost as marked; she acknowledged their presence with the coolest of nods, and turned back at once to the women as far more interesting. The elder, flattered, almost inarticulate, was already

at her feet, and the younger was visibly impressed. The countess was confiding to them something about her gown—the clumsiness of maids—

Selden noted the satisfied smile which the baron could not wholly repress, the energetic way in which he polished his glass. Evidently the countess was playing the game—whatever the game might be—very much to his liking.

"I have heard so much of you and of your daughter from my old friend, Baron Lappo," the countess continued to the enraptured Mrs. Davis, speaking with a slight and very taking accent which Selden had not heretofore noted in her speech. "Permit me to say that your daughter is lovely—the true queenly type!"

Mrs. Davis sputtered her delight. Her daughter blushed crimson. Selden started at the adjective. Queenly—now what did she mean by that? And looking at her more closely, he saw that in some way she had subtly altered her appearance; her face seemed longer, her eyes had a little slant, her lips were not so full.

"I see you are not accustomed to such frankness," she rattled on, "but I am frank or nothing. If I think nice things about people, I believe in saying them—yes, even to their faces; ugly ones, also, sometimes!"

"But you talk almost like an American!" cried Mrs. Davis.

"It was in America I learned my English," the countess explained. "I was there with my parents as a girl. At Washington."

Mrs. Davis had a vision of the countess' father as a great diplomat. But Selden gave another start. She had not mentioned Washington to him that afternoon, she had spoken only of Montana.

Miss Davis had been looking at the countess intently, with startled eyes, as though striving to recall some memory.

"I should be so glad to talk to you

about it," added the countess. She had noticed the girl's intent look, and turned full face to her, so that she got all the benefit of the slanting eyes and the thin, arched brows. "Perhaps you will have tea with me?"

"You must have tea with us!" cried Mrs. Davis. "To-morrow?"

"If you wish," assented the countess with a gracious smile, which included the younger woman.

Meanwhile the king and the baron had been consulting together in undertones; from their aspect it was evident that something had gone amiss.

"I was forced to send Danilo on an important errand this afternoon," said the king finally, "and he has not yet returned. He has had an accident, perhaps."

"Oh, I hope not!" cried Mrs. Davis. "That would be too terrible!"

"If any one was injured," said the king with a smile, "it was probably some one else, in which case he would be detained only until he had satisfied the police. But I do not think we shall wait any longer. Baron, will you summon the Princess Anna?"

The baron disappeared and presently returned with a tall young lady on his arm. She was perhaps twenty-five, very dark, with a perceptible mustache, and very thin.

"This is my youngest daughter, Anna," said the king, "named, as all my daughters were, for one of the great saints of my country."

The Princess Anna bowed to the guests, without taking her hand from the baron's arm. She, at least, seemed to have no reason to ingratiate herself with the rich Americans!

The king nodded, and the doors at the end of the room swung back, disclosing the gleaming table beyond.

"May I have the honor, madame?" He offered his arm to Mrs. Davis.

Selden permitted young Davis to take

the countess, and followed with the sister.

"Were you really in earnest a moment ago?" she inquired in a low voice.

"In earnest?"

"Yes—in saying the baron might be right?"

"Why, yes, entirely so," he answered, puzzled by the intensity of her look.

She took a deep breath and turned her head away for an instant.

And then they were at the table.

When they were seated, he found himself still at her right. Beyond her was a vacant place, evidently for Danilo, while beyond that, and to the right of the king, sat the countess. Selden smiled to find his surmise correct—even at eighty, the king had not lost interest in pretty women!

Mrs. Davis was at the king's left, while beyond her, the baron, the Princess Anna and young Davis, who had been adroitly detached from the countess, completed the company.

The king, with patriarchal dignity, asked grace in his native tongue, somewhat to the confusion of his guests. Selden could see Mrs. Davis regarding with a startled eye the red cap which the king made no motion to remove. Then came the soup, and she was startled again to see the Princess Anna rise and serve her father.

"In our country," the king explained, with a smile, seeing her glance, "it is the custom for the daughters to serve their parents. I consider it a very good custom, and my daughters have always followed it. As you know," he went on, tasting the soup with an approving smack of the lips, "I have a daughter who is a queen, but when she comes to visit her father, she still gives him to eat."

The picture of a queen ladling out the soup was too much for Mrs. Davis, and she gasped audibly.

And it was at that moment the prince appeared.

Selden was sure he had never looked more handsome. His eyes were shining; his dark skin, usually a little sallow, was most becomingly flushed. He seemed in the gayest possible mood—even a reckless mood.

"No, do not rise!" said the king to his guests, motioning the prince to his side and asking him a stern question in his native tongue. The prince replied expansively. For an instant a scowl of displeasure threatened the king's countenance, then he smiled blandly round upon the company.

"It was as I thought," he said. "Fortunately, no one was killed. Make your apologies, sir, to the ladies."

The prince, with a mocking light in his eyes, bent over Mrs. Davis, and raised her plump hand to his lips.

"It was really impatience to be with you, madame, which caused the accident," he said gayly. "A speed too swift—a road slippery from the rain—"

"Oh, what a fib!" broke in the lady, tapping him playfully with her lorgnette. But never for an instant did she suspect how great a fib it was!

The lady made his other greetings swiftly, then dropped into the seat beside Miss Davis, kissed her fingers as he had her mother's, and spoke a low sentence into her ear. And Selden, noting the quick flush which swept across her cheek, noting the baron's attentive eyes, noting the king's benignant good humor, understood in that instant the whole plot.

For a flash his eyes met those of the Countess Rémond, who was smiling cynically, maliciously, as though at some long-cherished vengeance about to be accomplished. Then he turned back to his plate, his heart hot with resentment. It was horrible that a girl like that should be sacrificed to the ambitions of a worldly mother! No wonder she was disillusioned! And to a libertine like the prince! Of that, of course, she

could have no suspicion, and she would find it out too late. Of happiness there was not the slightest possibility.

Yet—was there not? He looked again at Myra Davis—there was something in her face that said she was not a fool, that she had had some experience in the world, so she must know something of the ways of princes. And it would be exciting to be the wife of a man like that—to be compelled to hold one's place against all the other women.

And he would teach her many things.

Of love, as the average American understood it—mutual trust, mutual respect, common interests, fidelity, tepid affection—nothing at all; but there would be bursts of passion, shattering experiences, and, if she were strong enough to survive being cast down from the heights from time to time, she might win through, might, in the end, even hold him. At least, she might find such a life more interesting than the placidity of the meadows. There was always that choice in life between emotion and tranquillity, and Selden had never been able to make up his mind which was the wiser.

To be a queen—even an unhappy one—even of a tiny kingdom!

But what of Madame Ghita? Did she know of this? Was that why they had met her driving toward Nice? Did she intend to interfere?

And was it conceivable that any man would leave a woman like that?

Probably the prince had no intention of leaving her—and again Selden glowed with indignation. But he was conscious, deep down in his heart, that his indignation was not so much for the girl at his side as for that other woman, about to be deserted, or, worse still, compelled to share—

He woke abruptly to the knowledge that Miss Davis was addressing him.

"You have been there quite recently, Mr. Selden?"

"Yes," he answered, guessing instinctively where she meant. "Only a couple of months ago."

"Are the people happy?"

"Yes, in a way. Of course, life is very hard among those bleak mountains. But, then, it has always been. They are used to it."

"It is more hard than ever now, is it not?" put in the baron, from across the table.

"It is harder than ever all over Europe," said Selden. "This generation will never know the old ease."

"That is true," agreed the baron. "Yet, with proper guidance, some nations will emerge more quickly than others. What our little country needs is, first of all, a firm and experienced hand at the helm, and, secondly, capital to revive its industries, repeople its pastures and fertilize its fields. With those, it will be the first nation in Europe to find its feet again."

"Undoubtedly," said Selden. "But where is the capital to come from?"

"Do you really think he is right?" asked Myra Davis, in a low voice.

Selden was conscious that the eyes of the whole table were on them, and that the whole table was waiting for his answer.

"Yes, I really believe so," he said.

"And that the people will be happier?" she persisted.

Then he understood. Here was one of the forces urging her forward. But it would take millions—she should understand that.

"Yes," he said slowly, with a strange sense of responsibility. "They would be stronger, perhaps, if compelled to work out their own destinies. But not happier. Certainly, they would be glad to have the way cleared for them. But to do it effectively would take a large sum—a very large sum."

There was no secret about it any more—they were all sitting there waiting for her decision.

"And, mademoiselle," pursued the baron, "our little kingdom would be like home to you, since you have already lived so long among our people."

Selden looked the question he scarcely felt at liberty to utter.

"Nearly all of our people who went to America settled in one place," explained the baron, "in the town founded by the father of mademoiselle and named after him. There they assisted in the development of an enormous property—a mountain of copper."

A great light burst upon Selden. So it was that Davis—the copper king! Well, there would be millions enough!

But those were the people who had come back from America to make their own country a republic, also—Jeneski had told him the story—it was their labor which had amassed those millions which were to be used to rivet back upon them the chains they had broken! He did not know whether to laugh or weep at the savage irony of it!

The king had bent toward Mrs. Davis and asked her a swift question, his face purple with excitement; she had glanced toward her daughter and a long look had passed between them. Selden could see the baron's mesmeric gaze upon her. She looked down, she looked up; then her cheeks went crimson, and she nodded her head.

The king, with beaming face, signed to the attendants to fill the glasses.

"Messieurs and mesdames," he said, rising, glass in hand, "I have in my life, which has been a long one, had many happy moments, but none so happy as this, when it is my privilege to announce the betrothal of my grandson and successor, Prince Danilo, and the fair young lady who sits beside him. Let us drink to their happiness, and that of my beloved country!"

He drained his glass, sent it crashing over his shoulder, trundled around the table, caught the girl in his arms, and

kissed her resoundingly upon each cheek.

"My dear," he said, "the young rascal shall make you happy—I promise it. Otherwise, I will disinherit him, and you shall reign alone!"

CHAPTER XI.

It was difficult to quiet down, after that, and go on with the dinner.

The whole house was buzzing with the great news, and Selden was sure that champagne was being consumed even more liberally below stairs than above. Probably the king knew it, too, but for once he did not care. Looking at him sitting there triumphant and beignant, Selden was reminded of nothing so much as of some biblical patriarch—Abraham, perhaps. Certainly, at this moment the king's bosom seemed wide enough to contain the whole world. He was ready to forgive all his enemies!

The baron fairly scintillated, for this was his great hour of triumph. Even the dark, immobile face of the Princess Anna was illumined as by some inward light. She had come around the table and kissed the bride-to-be solemnly on the forehead, as though consecrating her to a sacred cause.

Mrs. Davis was radiant—here was the greatest marriage which any American family had ever achieved; there had been dukes and counts, perhaps an earl or two, and in one case the brother of a king—also deposed—but never before a crown prince. Her daughter would be the first American girl to sit upon a throne! No wonder she was overcome, a little hysterical, very warm with excitement and champagne, dabbing her eyes now and then and looking altogether ridiculous.

She had never really believed it would happen—Myra was such a strange girl; yet here it was. And she had a vision of Myra sitting on her

throne, with an ermine robe and crown of diamonds, very regal, and she herself, considerably thinner than in life, standing a little to one side, but very near, also with ermine and brilliants; diplomats and statesmen in white-satin knee breeches coming up to be introduced, as she had seen them in a picture of one of Queen Victoria's receptions, and the crowd bowing, very happy and loyal—

The Countess Rémond was also deeply moved, though in a dark and threatening way that puzzled Selden. Her eyes were gleaming exultantly, her lips were drawn back in a smile that was almost a snarl, as she bent her gaze upon Myra Davis, and a spasm of nervous emotion ran across her face from time to time, in spite of her efforts to repress it. There was something bloodthirsty and wolflike about her, which gave Selden a little shiver of repulsion, for he felt that he was looking at the real woman, with all her veils torn aside, and it seemed almost indecent.

She had the veils up in a moment, and was again the calm and smiling woman of the world, but Selden never forgot the shock of that moment's revelation, and any feeling of tenderness he may have had for her died then and there. He felt only that she was a woman to be watched and to be feared.

Young Davis had gone suddenly morose, but that may have been because of his high alcoholic content, and the look he bent upon his sister had something ironic and mocking in it, as though he alone understood her, and found her far from admirable. Few girls, however, are altogether admirable to their brothers!

Of the whole company, the affianced pair were by far the most composed. The prince had, indeed, kissed the girl's hand at the end of the king's speech, but his demonstration had ended there.

As for Myra Davis, except that her eyes were larger and darker than usual, there was no outward evidence that she was in any way excited. Selden wondered where she had gained such self-control.

The dinner came to an end, at last; the bride-to-be was carried away by the other women, Danilo bowing over her hand at the door, and the men were left together to discuss the great event.

It was the king who opened the discussion.

"I trust that you are pleased, Monsieur Selden," he said. "I was hoping that the announcement might be made to-night, but I was not sure. I am very happy that you were present."

"If I am not mistaken," put in the baron, "Monsieur Selden himself had something to do with bringing about the decision."

"Perhaps so," said Selden. "I had no suspicion what it was leading to, but I only said what I thought."

"You said it admirably," commented the baron.

"But I confess," Selden continued, "that I am astonished you should care so much for my opinion. After all, what does it matter?"

The baron glanced at the king, who nodded.

"I have been expecting that question," said the baron, "and I am going to answer it frankly. We have nothing to conceal, therefore let us place all the cards on the table. It is, then, not yet entirely clear ahead. To restore the dynasty—yes, that will not be difficult. But to win the approval of the public opinion of the world, that will not be so easy. This is a day when republics, however inefficient, are in favor, and when kings, however enlightened, are looked at askance. There was a time when public opinion outside of one's own country could be disregarded, but that is so no longer.

"That our country will be vastly bene-

fited by this restoration I do not for a moment doubt," went on the baron. "You have yourself perceived how deeply this great opportunity appeals to Miss Davis. Nevertheless, we shall have to maintain our position at first against great prejudice. It will be said at once that we have bought our way back to the throne; our enemies will dig up old scandals and invent new ones; there will be a bitter campaign against us. Well, we want you on our side.

"Wait!" he added, as Selden made a gesture of negation. "Hear me out. What we are asking you to do is this: to observe us, to question us, to dissect our motives, and to report faithfully what you see and learn; to be present at the restoration and to examine our conduct. We do not fear public opinion, monsieur, if it is correctly informed. I am sure that we may count upon you to do so much."

"Why, yes," said Selden, "of course I shall be glad to do that—I should have done that anyway—only—"

"Only you must be free to say what you wish—but certainly! What we hope is to convince you and, through you, the world—especially England and America. America will have a deep interest in this restoration; there has never before been an American queen."

"We have a conviction that they are all queens!" laughed Selden. "But, of course, there will be tremendous interest in a real one. May I begin asking questions at once?"

"Please ask as many as you wish!"

"How do you propose to accomplish this restoration? Not by force, I hope?"

"Certainly not! We shall first approach Jeneski and his ministers, lay before them our plans for the country, and invite them to withdraw. I am hoping that they will do so. After all, Jeneski is a patriot."

"But should they still foolishly persist?"

"The assembly is to be elected in March. We will carry the elections and the new assembly will recall the king."

"You will bribe the electors?"

"Not at all. We will explain to them, as we did to Jeneski and his ministers, our plans for the development and enrichment of the country; we will organize our friends and spend some money in propaganda—yes. But that is legitimate—even in America, I understand."

"Yes," said Selden, "nobody can object to that."

"Do not forget, Monsieur Selden, as I have already pointed out to you, that the king is very popular with his people. He could have appealed to them before this with every hope of success; but before he did so, he wished to be in position to assure their future."

"You are sure that Miss Davis will wish to use her millions in this way?"

"But yes—have you not yourself seen it? She is on fire at the great opportunity. And there is a certain justice, it seems to me, in the fact that the millions wrung from that mountain of copper by the labor of our young men are to be used for the succor and rejuvenation of their country."

"That is one way of regarding it, certainly," Selden conceded. He glanced at young Davis, who, more morose than ever, was tracing patterns with his glass on the cloth. Had he no interest in his sister's future? Well, there was one question which must be asked, and he himself would ask it. "What about Miss Davis herself—her happiness, her well-being? Is she just a tool in your hands?"

Davis looked up, his eyes a little bloodshot, an ironical smile upon his lips, as though wondering how Selden could be so silly.

"I thank you for that question, sir," put in the king, with the utmost earnestness. "As for Miss Davis, I

charge myself with her. She shall be my daughter. Have no fear. I was entirely serious in what I said just now about the succession. I shall have the necessary papers executed and passed by the assembly so that, in case of my death, my wishes can be carried out if there is need."

Danilo shrugged his shoulders. After all, he seemed to say, there were many places in the world more amusing than his bleak little capital. And there was Madame Ghita—

The king regarded him somberly. "Young people to-day are lacking in reverence," he said, speaking in French. "They have no sense of responsibility. It was not so in my time. I was only nineteen when my uncle died and I was proclaimed prince. It was not until fifty years later that the powers accorded me the title of king. During all that time I had labored ceaselessly, I had granted my people a constitution and an assembly, and was leading them along the path of self-government. Then the war came and without hesitation I chose the side of the Entente against the Turk and the Prussian. My little country was seized and overrun, my army was captured, everything seemed lost; but in my exile I waited patiently, certain that my allies would win and would restore me to my throne. That would seem to be simple justice, would it not, monsieur?"

Selden nodded. Undoubtedly there was a good deal to be said on the king's side—and the king was an excellent advocate!

"I was aware," went on the king with dignity, "that certain old enemies of mine were seeking to defame me, but I despised them. It is true that my eldest son had married a German woman, but that was nearly forty years ago. It is true that another son took refuge in Vienna and fought with the Austrians, but it was not with my consent —there was nothing I could do. It is

a lie that my army surrendered unnecessarily; it was on the verge of starvation. It is a lie that I intrigued against my allies. Nevertheless, there were some who believed these lies."

His eyes were flashing and he was pounding the table with his fist.

"What happened, sir, at the end?" Selden asked. "I have heard many stories—I should like to know the true one."

"And you shall, sir," said the king. "I want the world to know it. This is what happened: When we entered the war, some hundreds of our people who had lived in America returned to fight for their country. That was their duty. Nevertheless, I salute them for coming back! Many had gone to America because they had some grievance against me—it is impossible to please every one!—and over there those grievances had magnified. Among them there had grown up a sentiment of revolution. They even sent back, from time to time, an emissary to assassinate me. I did not mind that," the king added with a smile. "It rendered life less dull. But it enraged my people."

The baron nodded solemnly.

"There were two attempts," he said. "It was not a thing to jest about."

"Ah, well," said the king, with a wave of his hand, "all that was long ago! But these men came back. We could not inquire, then, as to their sentiments; the times were desperate—we had need of all of them. But they brought their ideas into the army, and, after the surrender, during the long months in the prison camps of Austria, they had the opportunity to propagate their poison. It spread everywhere."

"Then came the end. Austria withdrew her troops for a last stand against Italy; was defeated and surrendered. I was already back in my capital, with Lappo here, striving to restore order, when the prison camps were opened

and the army came streaming back. Jeneski, who had been waiting for that moment, met them at the frontier, called together a number of his partisans, declared for a republic, and marched against me. I had no forces to oppose him, and again was driven into exile. He persuaded the conference at Paris to confirm this so-called republic. But he was ill at ease; he knew that I had still some power, and he offered me a huge sum if I would abdicate. I refused. A king cannot abdicate. Only cowards abdicate. And I would not further impoverish my country. No, monsieur, I am still king!"

Majesty—it was a word befitting that memorable figure, which had been buffeted by the storms of eighty years and was still unconquered. There was something epic about it, so that one forgot its follies and its sins, and remembered only its gallantry.

"Yes, and my grandson shall be king after me," he went on, with an irate eye upon Danilo, "and after him my great-grandson. Whether they reign or not, that is in the hands of Providence; but they shall be kings, none the less! For kingship is not a thing that one can lay down at will; it is something that one is born, as one is born a man. It is one's blood."

A certain anxiety might have been discerned in the attentive Lappo's eye. He knew his king, and he feared, perhaps, that he might become too expansive with the warmth of the wine. At any rate, he coughed rather markedly.

And the king, who also knew his Lappo, understood. He emptied his glass and rose.

"It is time we joined the ladies," he said.

"One moment, sir!" interjected Selden. "I realize that I am a guest here to-night. I appreciate very deeply the confidence you have shown me and the

candor with which you have spoken. I ask you, therefore, how much of this you would wish me to use?"

"Why, all of it, my friend!" cried the king. "How little you understand me! All of it!"

"Thank you, sir," said Selden, and glanced at his watch. "In that case, I must be making my adieus."

"Certainly," said the king, "but I count upon seeing you soon again. You wish to speak to me?" he added to Danilo, for the prince, who had grown more and more distract during this *apologia*, had risen and come close to his side.

He spoke for a moment earnestly in the king's ear, and again Selden saw overspreading the royal features the same cloud he had noticed once before that evening. Nevertheless, the king listened patiently until the prince had finished, then, with an impatient shake of the head, waved him away.

"Come, messieurs!" he said, and led the way into the salon.

There was an ugly look in the prince's eye—the baron stepped to his side and fell behind with him, talking earnestly.

The ladies were seated before a wood fire crackling pleasantly on a wide hearth, and it was at once evident that the Countess Rémond was not only the center of the scene, but completely dominated it. Mrs. Davis and her daughter sat close on either side of her, and the Princess Anna, her dark face unusually animated, bent above an embroidery frame near by. And they were talking very, very confidentially.

The king paused for an instant on the threshold to contemplate this picture, so delightful and domestic, and then, as the women started to their feet, came forward with a benignant smile.

"No, no, do not rise!" he said, and himself sat down in a great chair which had been placed for him at a corner of the fireplace. "How many old scenes

this brings back to me— evenings of long ago when we sat together around the fire, my family and I. We were very much out of the world, but at least we could have books and the critiques from Paris and our own lessons in the languages. I even wrote a poem, now and then; yes, and a play, which was pronounced not too bad—celebrating one or another of our great patriots and martyrs. For even a small people, Monsieur Selden, may have its great legends! Which reminds me that I must not detain you. Monsieur Selden," he added to the company, "goes to announce to the world the great event which has taken place here to-night."

Selden's eyes were on Myra Davis. He knew she would look at him and he wanted to see that look. But when it came, it told him nothing. Already, it appeared, she was learning to wear the mask which all queens must wear!

So he made his adieus quickly. Only, when he came to the countess, she held his hand for an instant and gave him a long look, as though seeking to read his mind; but he was sure that she had not succeeded.

The baron, detaching himself from the prince, accompanied him to the door.

"I shall not see you for a few days," he said. "It is necessary that I go to Paris at once to arrange certain matters. As soon as I return, I will let you know. I shall then be able to tell you more about our plans."

"You are giving me a great scoop," Selden pointed out, "an exclusive piece of news," he added, as the baron stared. "If you wish that I should share it with others——"

The baron stopped him with a gesture.

"No, no, no!" he protested. "We wish it to be yours only; we shall be very happy if you can win some glory out of it. It will make certain chancelleries

sit up—*hein?*—this news! Shall I call a car for you?"

"No, thank you, I prefer to walk," said Selden, and left him chuckling on the steps.

The great gates were clanged open for him and he passed through them into the Promenade des Anglais. The night was soft and warm, with the rising moon painting a path of silver across the sea, and all the world was out to drink its beauty. He would have to go to the main office, to get his wire off promptly, and he walked on as rapidly as the crowd permitted.

Yes, the baron was right; this news would upset some of the chancelleries, especially those of other little republics, delicately balanced, not yet sure of existence. How would Jeneski take it? Time had not been able to dim the impression left upon him by that vivid enthusiast—a dreamer, if there ever was one, with a haunted look, as of a man with something gnawing at his heart; yet not entirely a dreamer—capable, at least, of turning into a man of action when some desperate crisis demanded it, and of giving and taking hard knocks. That hasty meeting at the frontier, that declaration of a republic—he had been a man of action then, and might be again!

Yet, even as he talked with him, Jeneski had seemed too much of another world, and that impression was deepened now. Jeneski's visions were all of toil and conflict, of scaling the heights in search of human brotherhood; but very few people cared to scale heights. By far the most of them preferred to sit quietly at home, before a good fire, with hands folded complacently over a full belly. And that was precisely what the king would offer.

Should he, Selden, help or hinder?

It was too much, perhaps, to say that he could stop it; but the king was right in thinking that no dynasty could now endure unless the public opinion of the

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world approved. It would be easy to win that approval, there was so much to be said on the king's side. It was only necessary to take him seriously.

And yet he was also singularly open to satire and to irony. He could be painted—and perhaps with equal justice—either as the patriotic and devoted father of his people, or as a senile survival of the Middle Ages, with a degenerate grandson for his heir.

There was the weak spot in his armor—his Achilles' heel! Danilo, with his amours—with Madame Ghita!

But, after all, as the king had said, Danilo could be swept aside—would be swept aside, if necessary. He had the king's word.

Why not, for the present at least, give the king the benefit of the doubt?

And, this point decided, Selden felt his special falling into shape in his brain, so that, when he reached the telegraph office, showed his credentials, and drew the first form from the box, it was ready to his pen.

Half an hour later, with a sigh of relief and satisfaction, he pushed the last sheet in to the impressed attendant, and started to put away his pen. Then, with a little smile, he drew out another form and wrote a hasty message.

"I will pay for this one," he said, and waited until the attendant counted the words.

"This name, monsieur," suggested the attendant, pointing to the address, "perhaps you had better spell it."

"J-e-n-e-s-k-i," said Selden. "Jeneski."

CHAPTER XII.

Well, it was done, Selden reflected rather grimly next morning, over his coffee and rolls.

A telegram from the foreign editor of the *Times* had been brought him with his breakfast, congratulating him warmly on his exclusive story and praying him to follow it up.

He realized, however, that his judgment had been considerably clouded the night before. Doubtless, on his own quarter-deck, even Captain Kidd might seem a picturesque and downright character, who could cite injustices done him, and could point to atrocities committed by civilized society far more horrible than any of his own; he might even attain a certain merit because of his bold directness, his straight speaking, his scorn of littleness. He was probably fond of children and a sentimentalist at bottom.

So the king, face to face, was more impressive than in retrospect; yet, Selden reminded himself, there was a lot to be said for him; it was only fair that he should be given a chance to show what he could do. The trouble was that there was so little to be said for his grandson.

Though, Selden added to himself, even here he might be unjust. He did not really know Danilo. One thing in his favor was that he did not pose—people could take him or leave him. He was not a coward, and undoubtedly he had his code. He might be a decent sort, at bottom.

But Selden knew it was none of these things that really troubled him; it was the uneasy feeling that he had been responsible for that quick nod of the head which Myra Davis had given her mother. And that, he told himself, was something he could *not* be responsible for—not, at least, until he was sure she understood exactly everything that nod let her in for. After that, if she wished to keep on nodding, it would be nobody's affair but her own.

Therefore, it was his duty to see that she did understand. He must go to her and tell her—tell her very plainly and directly, without palliating phrases. He squirmed a little at the prospect, but there was no other way he could square himself with his conscience. She would probably resent it, and her

mother, of course, would be vastly outraged. But he must risk it.

He had the feeling that the baron had been a little lacking in candor the night before; his opinions had been asked without any hint of their implications. Yet, as he cast his mind back over what he had said, he did not see where he would have altered it, even if he had known. Nevertheless, it was up to him to enlighten Miss Davis very thoroughly on the morals and manners of princes.

He was staring moodily out of the window, turning all this over in his mind, and keeping resolutely submerged a very, very sore spot in his consciousness whose existence he would not even admit, when a knock at the door announced a boy with a salver, on which lay a tiny note.

"I will be on the terrace at eleven," it stated, and it was signed "Vera de Rémond."

"There is no answer," he said to the boy, tipped him, and went back to the window. What did he care where the countess would be at eleven o'clock? He had not forgotten the moment of revelation the night before when she had looked at Myra Davis like a beast of prey sure of its quarry. There had been in her face a kind of gloating, as though she were revenging herself in some way upon the girl. But that was nonsense; they had never met before. Yet why had she seemed so triumphant? Could it be some one else—Jeneski, Madame Ghita!

The name was uttered at last; he had not been able to keep it back. Yes, there was the sore spot; it was for her he was uneasy, it was for her he was troubled, it was she for whom his heart reproached him, it was she whom he wished to protect.

He suddenly made up his mind that he would see the countess. If she really had a secret, he would drag it out of her.

So he arrayed himself rapidly, glad to have something definite to do, and sallied forth into the bright, cool morning.

He had not noticed the time, but as he left the hotel the big clock over the casino entrance told him that he was early, so he strolled about the "camembert," as the little round park just in front of the casino is called, and looked at the people and tried to arrange his thoughts.

The crowd here is astonishingly different to that on the terrace, for these are the people who haunt the public rooms—derelicts, for the most part, poised, as it were, before the mouth of the dragon, searching for an inspiration before plunging in to stake their last louis, or perhaps with their last louis lost and nothing to do but watch the feverish procession which continually ascends and descends the casino steps and wonder where another louis can be borrowed or stolen.

It is a motley and sordid crowd, lolling on the benches or loitering uncertainly about: ridiculous old women, wonderfully arrayed in the fabrics of 1860, fondly misinterpreting the astonished glances cast at them; frizzled old men struggling to conceal a bankrupt interior behind a pompous front; colettes feigning exclusiveness, and at the same time attempting to appear not too difficult; impecunious gamblers trying to pose as men of affairs, but always betrayed by a loose end somewhere; dowdy old couples to whom the tables have become a habit more devastating than any drug—a new "Comédie Humaine," waiting for another Balzac.

Selden, regarding these people for the hundredth time with an appreciative eye, wished that he were the Balzac and, sighing a little because he was not, he turned away to the gayer life of the terrace—gayer, at least on the surface, fascinating as a whirlpool is fascinating, tempting the onlooker to jump in

and be swallowed up, and intriguing as things dangerous and forbidden have been intriguing since the days of Eve.

The Countess Rémond possessed those qualities of fascination and intrigue, too—superlatively. He realized it anew as he saw her coming toward him down the steps, her lithe body faultlessly clad in a gray *tailleur*, which, conventional and subdued as it was, seemed somehow exotic as she wore it. Selden was rather glad that he had gained immunity the night before by that glimpse he had had of her soul; he was out of danger.

"How good of you to come!" she said, as he took her hand. And then she looked at him more closely, for her instinct felt the change in him. "Are you annoyed at something? Did it disarrange you to meet me here?"

"No, not at all."

"I shall keep you but a moment. But I felt that I must have a little talk with you before—"

"Before?" he prompted, as she hesitated.

"Before I begin my day's work. And since the safest place for a confidential conversation is in the midst of a crowd—"

"So we are going to have a confidential conversation?" asked Selden, falling into step beside her.

"Yes, on my part, at least. Like the baron, I am going to place all my cards on the table."

"It is what I had been hoping," said Selden quietly.

She looked at him quickly, smiling a little.

"Yes, I saw in your eyes last night that you were not pleased with me. Perhaps I had had too much champagne. But I am quite recovered from that!"

"So am I," said Selden grimly. "In fact, I am very sober—I have even some twinges of remorse."

"I was afraid you would have. That

is one reason I wanted to see you. We must talk it out."

"Yes, we must," he assented.

She led the way to a seat at the end of the terrace facing the harbor, where they could talk undisturbed.

"Now," she said, "why remorse?"

"Well," began Selden slowly, "you know as well as I do that, while this flood of American money may be a sort of short-cut to prosperity for your little country, in the end it will be disastrous for it, since it brings the old dynasty back."

"No," she said, "I know nothing of the sort."

He looked at her.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"How long do you think the old king has to live?"

"I don't know."

"Well, not long. He has already had two heart attacks."

"Ah, I see what you mean," he murmured. "After him the republic again?"

"Certainly. My country would never endure Danilo, nor permit itself to be governed by an American."

"But, in that case," he pointed out, "this whole affair is nothing but a piece of sharp practice."

"Against whom?"

"Against the Davises."

"Oh," she said negligently, "they deserve it. I am not concerned about them."

"But I am!" he cried. "At least I am concerned for Miss Davis."

"You need not be," she assured him, with a flash of the eyes. "She is by no means the ingénue you seem to suppose; she can take care of herself. And she can afford to lose a few millions."

"It isn't the money—I think the country should have some of it—but she ought to know exactly what she is letting herself in for."

"You mean Madame Ghita?"

"Yes."

"Well, why don't you tell her?" she asked mockingly.

"I've about made up my mind that I shall have to," he said dismally. "You see, I sort of pushed her into it last night."

She was smiling again as she looked at him.

"And this is the real cause of the remorse?"

"I suppose so."

"How did you push her into it?"

"I was silly enough to say that I really thought she could do a lot of good out there."

"Well, don't you believe it?"

"Of course, I believe it. But that isn't the question. Dash it all, you know as well as I do what I mean! These women are absolutely ignorant of European ideas—of the ideas of such fellows as Danilo. Mrs. Davis poses as worldly-wise, thoroughly initiated, but she is really as ignorant as a child. She has heard that men have mistresses, that husbands are sometimes unfaithful, and so has her daughter, I suppose. But it is all outside their personal experience. It is always some other woman's husband. It would never occur to either of them that their own husbands could be, or that, in this particular instance, the husband-to-be is not only unfaithful now, but hasn't the slightest intention of being faithful in the future—that he would laugh at such an idea—that he is living here with his mistress—"

"But she is not his mistress," put in the countess quietly.

Selden, halted in midcareer, could only stare. A dozen conjectures flashed through his mind.

"Not his mistress?" he stammered.

"It is Madame Ghita you are talking about, I suppose?"

"Of course."

"She is his wife—she has a right to the name; I have even an idea that he is faithful to her."

"His wife!" Selden gasped.
"But—"

"Married quite regularly in Paris—morganatically, of course. I don't know whether you will think that better or worse."

Selden, his head in a whirl, didn't know himself. But of one thing he was sure—the wrong to Madame Ghita would be far worse than he had fancied. He tried to explain this to the countess, who listened with an amused smile.

"You remind me of those silly old knights," she said, "who were always riding out to rescue some maiden, without waiting to find out whether she really wanted to be rescued. Don't worry about Madame Ghita. In the first place, she knew perfectly well when she married the prince that he would have to marry again some day for the sake of the dynasty. In the second place, I suspect that the prince is much more in love with her than she is with him. At least, the baron tells me that she is an unusually clever woman, while, as you know, the prince is quite stupid."

"So she can hold him if she wants to?"

"Undoubtedly. And if she wants to, she will stop at nothing."

"Do you know her?" Selden asked.

"No."

"So you don't know—"

"Whether she will want to? No, but I am going to find out. I have asked her to lunch with me to-day. This is the first part of my day's work."

"Does Miss Davis know about her?"

"Not yet—at least, I don't think so. But she is going to."

"You mean you are going to tell her?"

"Yes," said the countess, with a little grimace. "That is the second part of my day's work. I have tea with her and her mother this afternoon."

Selden took off his hat and drew a deep breath of relief.

"Then that lets me out," he said. "I think it's rather sporting of you."

"Don't idealize me or my motives," protested the countess. "It is a matter of business. Lappo asked me to. We are going to tell her because she is certain, now, to learn it anyway, and it is far better that she learn it from us than from some malicious newspaper or anonymous letter. It will not be difficult; as the baron puts it, it will be almost as though she were marrying a divorced man. That will not shock her so much."

"No, I suppose not," Selden agreed. "Of course, you will swing it!"

"Yes, I think so," agreed the countess with a little smile. "But before I started to try to swing it, I wanted to have this talk with you, so that everything would be quite clear between us. I must know where you stand."

"All right. Cards on the table. Go ahead!" He settled back to listen.

"If Miss Davis has the situation explained to her, so that she knows what she is letting herself in for, as you put it, and still chooses to go ahead with it, you will have no further compunctions on that score, I hope?"

"Certainly not."

"Well," said the countess quietly, "I shall be very much surprised if she doesn't go on with it. She is neither a child nor a fool—and there is a compelling impulse driving her on."

"Yes, she sees herself the benefactress of an impoverished people."

"The country will have a new saint!" said the countess with a mocking little laugh. "But perhaps there is still another reason."

"You think the prince attracts her?"

"Oh, no—though she may get to like him. At present, he is just a necessary evil, since children have to have a father! He has one quality which will appeal to her more and more—he knows how to be discreet."

"Which reminds me," Selden re-

marked, "that the explosion you expected last night did not take place."

"No—the prince prevented it. It was that made him late."

"He was with her?"

"Yes. He must have promised her something."

"She knows, then?"

"Of course. Lappo has already had a talk with her."

"What did she say to him?"

The countess smiled.

"I do not know exactly—except that she spoke of love."

"Ah, you see!"

"But that does not discourage me," went on the countess cheerfully. "On the contrary. Women in love rarely speak of it. My own impression is that she is determined to make the best bargain she can—and she is right. But I shall have it out with her at lunch—that is, if she comes. She has not yet accepted, but I think she will, if only out of curiosity. There may be some fireworks, but in the end she will agree."

"Agree to what?" asked Selden.

"Agree to exchange the prince for the annuity which the king offers her."

Selden made a grimace of distaste. All this was a little too cynical—especially as it touched Madame Ghita.

The countess looked at him, her eyes sparkling with amusement.

"You don't like it?"

"No."

"But if she *does* agree, you will have no compunctions about her, either?"

"No—if she really does."

"You don't believe she will?" she asked, looking at him with a gaze suddenly intent, as though for the first time she saw something in his face she had not before suspected. "Well, come to lunch, too, and see for yourself."

Selden stared.

"It is *my* lunch," she explained. "I may ask whom I please. You will enjoy it."

"I'm not so sure of that!"

"Besides I shall need your moral support," she added laughingly.

"Will Lappo be there?"

"No, he has gone to Paris to arrange the marriage settlement with the Davis solicitor. There will be just we three. If she doesn't come, we shall be tête-à-tête."

Selden was distinctly conscious that he had no ardor for a tête-à-tête with the Countess Rémond, and, though he did his best to keep it out of his face, she instantly perceived it.

"How American you are!" she said, looking at him with laughing eyes. "No, I am not offended. But do not be afraid. She will come."

"But if she resents my presence—"

"She won't. If she does, you can leave before the real discussion begins."

"All right," said Selden, "I'll come. But I don't promise to give you any moral support. You may find me fighting on the other side."

"Then I shall be sure to win!" said the countess, and looked at him with a strange smile. "Now I must be going. The luncheon is at one, in my apartment." She glanced at her watch and sprang to her feet in a sudden panic. "Gracious! I must fly! No, you are not to come with me."

He watched her as she hurried away through the crowd, and ran lightly up the steps toward the casino.

At the top of the steps a burly man was standing, as though keeping an appointment, his eyes on the entrance to the hotel just across the street. The countess approached him swiftly and touched his arm.

As he started round upon her, Selden caught a glimpse of his face. It was Halsey, of the *Journal*.

What could be the connection between Halsey and the Countess Rémond?

The Pardonning of Belliard

By Rice Gaither



IT troubled him not at all when he sent Belliard to Sing Sing. He felt, indeed, like a squire of dames, like the squire especially of Clara Belliard. He was young, he was romantic, even though he was an assistant district attorney in the most sophisticated city in America. And she? Oh, she was quite beautiful. The calumny—or so the young prosecutor called it—sat lightly on the smoothness of her countenance. There was a quality about her which affirmed, even though she spoke never a word, that the thing her husband said about her wasn't true and couldn't be. Belliard was mad, or else he was a villain. Otherwise he would not, he could not, have killed Schuyler Vandam. Certainly, he would not have set up the plea that he had acted upon the authority of the unwritten law.

But now and again it did afterward trouble the young assistant district attorney whenever he thought of Belliard in Sing Sing. He came to have misgivings. Perhaps it was because he grew a little older, saw more of women in the courtroom where he worked, along Broadway where he had his social being. Perhaps it was because he became accustomed to reading one thing in their eyes and finding another in the evidence. Or perhaps it was because for a long time he did not see Clara Belliard at all, unless it happened that he glimpsed her appeal-

ing person through the hard crystal of her limousine in the parade along Fifth Avenue. On that point our story isn't clear.

However all that may be, Jerry Winfield, one-time squire of dames and especially of Clara Belliard, felt not so sure of many things that day when the district attorney tossed over to him a letter from the governor.

"Guess that's your case, Jerry," said the chief. "You certainly sent him up." There was admiration in his voice.

Jerry took the paper nonchalantly. Then he saw the name of the petitioner. It was Belliard. His hand shook a little and the words ran together.

"You mean the governor is putting it up to us?" he asked.

"Certainly," said the chief. "Fred wouldn't turn him out without our say-so, after all the trouble we had to get him in. That is, you had it, Jerry," the chief added generously. "You took an interest in that case. You certainly sent him up."

Jerry flushed under the insistence of the chief upon the point of responsibility.

"Oh, I don't know," he said. He wondered whether it had been Clara Belliard's eyes upon the jury or the ardor they kindled in him that really had sent Belliard to Sing Sing. "What do you want me to do?"

He tried to be casual, to speak as he would speak of any other case.

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"Do? Oh, I don't care. Belliard's old crowd is pushing the governor, that's all, and the governor is getting ready to come down on them hard—that is, unless we've changed our minds about the case. They want him back in Wall Street. I guess we don't care anything about that. If he's guilty, let him stay in Sing Sing."

"Guilty—what do you mean, guilty?" Jerry was speaking half to himself, trying to argue himself right. "He killed Vandam, didn't he?"

"See here, Jerry, I'm not the jury. I'm not even interested in the case. I'm not criticizing you. It was your show. He did kill Vandam—there was never any doubt about that, of course. It was your business to send him up for it. But now, you know, the trial's done. It wouldn't hurt us any if they let him out. There was some question, though, about the woman, wasn't there?"

There was. That was the thing that troubled Jerry. That was the question that had grown and grown, because he could no longer see the clearness of her eyes, the white fairness of her throat under the sables she wore to the courtroom; and perhaps because he had lived a bit since the trial.

"Well, it's up to you," said Jerry's chief, and the door shut while he was saying: "The governor will do what you say, I think."

Then he was gone, and it was up to Jerry.

That is why he almost immediately closed his desk and went out. He wanted the sun on things a bit.

It was a day to be abroad, one of those crisp mornings in the early spring when the air is light with a little chill, and the tall towers sweep against an unclouded blue. The green was new and fresh in City Hall Square; the sun streamed down even into the narrow cañon of Wall Street; the breeze flut-

tered the flags of the ferryboats, making white paths in the bay.

From the Battery he looked back at the myriad windows of that building wherein Belliard's business went of its own momentum; then up the river toward Sing Sing. It was a terrible thing to take a man out of life and send him up there. And suppose Belliard, after all, had had a right to kill Vandam?

The question went home with him that evening, twisted itself about his fancies as he rolled up the Avenue, kept his mind taut even as he layed in the porcelain luxury of his tub, and placed upon Toto, his old valet, full onus of the decision that he should wear dinner jacket instead of evening coat. It obtruded itself even at the Ritz, where he dined in the splendid isolation of a table to himself; especially at the Ritz, where, in the glittering throng, he watched the somewhat turgid stream of life, whirling and flowing.

There was Mimi of the "Follies," wearing the look of a child and smiling into the small eyes and heavy face of the swart man opposite her. There was Mrs. Normand Ellis, with old Boutelle, the philanderer, whose affair with her postdated those of the three correspondents named in her husband's suit for divorce. There were dowagers who lived in French châteaux by the hard pave of Fifth Avenue. There was one with her chauffeur—promoted.

But it was Mimi he looked at. Mimi, he decided, could fool any one she chose if only she wouldn't go about with heavy men. She was leaning forward now, blowing smoke rings through her lips, laughing softly. But for that cigarette she was an infant; but for that and the circumstance that he knew her. She saw him, waved a scintillant small hand, blew him the light kiss to which his youthful good looks and their intimacy entitled him, pushed back her chair and left the dining room with

Swarthy at her heels. Jerry's eyes followed her out.

It was almost unbelievable that the next person on whom the eyes of Jerry rested was Clara Belliard. Yet it must be recounted that when he turned his gaze again upon the chair, but lately filled with the loveliness of Mimi, Clara Belliard was sitting in it.

The act of her sitting there after Mimi ought to have settled everything for Jerry. Her sudden appearance was too dramatic to be real—yet there she was, clothed in reality, her downcast eyes studying the menu. She was in all the habiliments of the actual world—of Paris, some one versed in fashion might have said. It was truly Clara of the virgin look, of the unclouded countenance.

He was conscious of her satin simplicity, of deep blue draped from smooth, white shoulders; of slender, pearl-gray, silken ankles, at the blue hem. Her long white arms were beautiful and bare. They were Diana's arms. The gown was high. A satin ripple fell across her bosom. She was all asheen, from pearl-gray turban, with gleaming ostrich plume drooping on one side, to patent-leather slippers with their silver buckles.

The act of her sitting in Mimi's chair ought to have settled everything. But Jerry forgot Mimi. He forgot the dowagers and Mrs. Normand Ellis. There came the old phenomenon. Cynic though he was, steeped in the lore of his profession, an assistant district attorney in the most sophisticated city in America, he forsook his worldly knowledge for the primitive, masculine reaction to clear, blue, long-lashed eyes. He saw them as a virgin's eyes. She raised them and his met hers full tilt.

For half a moment they regarded one another. Jerry, in his knightly person, fancied he could see her look shot through with the fleeting shadow of pain. With what racking recollections

must his glances be fraught for her—courtroom, camera, yellow journals! Back of that—a death.

Then she nodded. Then she smiled. He discovered himself standing by her table, looking down into her upturned face. They had been talking.

"Won't you sit down?" he heard her say. "There are dozens waiting outside and it really seems a waste for two people who know each other to have two tables, doesn't it?" It did. Her logic was irrefutable. He sat down.

"I've dined," he told her. "But I'd like to smoke. May I?" He passed her his silver case. She shook her head.

"You may," she smiled. He never asked Mimi if he might smoke.

"Do you know," he began, "that I have been thinking of you all day?" He spoke the literal truth without knowing that he was telling her a moral lie, because he had forgotten how he thought of her. He could not remember as he looked into her virgin eyes. He meant only what he said. It seemed to him that he had been thinking of her always, just as he was thinking of her now. "I was thinking of you when I saw you."

"You looked very glum," she smiled.

"You had never come before." He let himself go—like that.

"Well," she conceded, "you had never seen me. I think you weren't alone."

He flushed ridiculously.

"One can be alone too much," she offered. "One—"

"One shouldn't be!" said Jerry fervently.

"Oh, well—" She did not finish, but he thought: "When one is married to a man in Sing Sing." She was no less inscrutable than the heroine of that factitious mystery in the banal press who looked out upon the world in printer's ink, from a frame of question marks; no less enigma than the witness

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prisoner—they startled him; steady, unimaginative eyes, big nose, combative chin. They could take punishment, that nose and chin. No hands were visible. He thought of fists. They could give punishment, those fists he thought of.

He looked from the picture of the man in Sing Sing to the woman at his side. An almost desperate uncertainty was visible for the moment in the delicate rose of her face. Her fingers went on opening and shutting the black plume fan. He felt that he was spying on her.

So he looked away. His eyes, seeking refuge in the material objects of the room, came to rest upon the mirrored door, wherefrom he quickly shifted them.

But it was too late. Already they had registered the image. He closed them. He saw a diagram, a picture in a yellow journal, an X before the mirrored door that led into the mysteries of her boudoir. "X," said the journal, "indicates the position of the body on the floor."

"What are you going to do about it?"

Her voice carried an appeal. She was putting it up to him again. And there is no telling what he might have said about it, might have done, had she not leaned back on the sofa, and, by accident, a wisp of her hair, miraculously vagrant from the smooth softness of its mass, brushed lightly against his cheek. Whatever resolution he had summoned fainted under the delicious contact.

"We'll have to think about it," he declared.

Joint consideration was entanglement, for they considered not at the plain table of deliberation, but at glittering boards uptown, in candle-lighted cellars in the Village, even in two seats that faced a stage where Minnie scintillated in 'ten thousand spangles.

They considered, also, as they sat close together in a disk-wheeled roadster purring up Riverside Drive or tearing along the countryside of Long Island.

"You never saw my house in Westchester," said Jerry one day as they crossed the Harlem with the cool wind in their faces.

"I didn't know young men in law had houses in Westchester—or gray roadsters with motors like this one," she answered.

He laughed.

"And you didn't know the Winfields were early settlers! I find life in law, not a livelihood. It doesn't buy my houses or my motors."

"Life in law," she repeated faintly, pensively. He felt a little reminiscent shiver against his shoulder. He knew she wasn't thinking of abstractions. But they did not speak of Belliard.

The car skimmed the smooth road along the river. The miles unrolled like velvet. His mind floated in the golden aura of his senses.

The house looked upon the Hudson across a wood in which the budding trees were putting forth new green and red. They stood together on the porch and looked down a path that led in among the trees, then followed it to a seat along a curved stone wall, from which a fountain trickled on to a rocky bed.

"You must love it here," she said, as they looked through the trees into the river, lighting up with the yellow of the descending sun.

"I suppose the gardener enjoys it," he answered with a momentary envy of the gardener.

So the days slipped away, and the time drew near when Jerry would have to make answer to his chief. But, fascinated by the virgin eyes, the curving brows, the hair of nonmetallic luster, Jerry put the question off.

Then came a day when the indifference of the chief was translated into

interest by a letter from the governor referring to his of the sixteenth ultimate and expressing the opinion that answer should be made forthwith.

"Well, Jerry, I guess you overlooked it," said the chief. "We'll have to get the letter off this afternoon."

Jerry stared at him with unseeing eyes.

He was in love with Clara Belliard.

"I say we'll have to get the letter off this afternoon." The chief turned to go. Jerry tried to speak to him, but found the muscles of articulation paralyzed. He caught him by the sleeve.

"I say," he managed, "not this afternoon!" Why not? She was innocent. Belliard should stay in Sing Sing. Then—

"This afternoon," the chief repeated firmly. "I've got to go out. Fix it up yourself. Mail it this afternoon."

Jerry nodded, and watched the unbending back of the chief receding through the doorway.

This afternoon! It was four o'clock. The bobbed-haired, blond stenographer, rattling away at her typewriter, had already finished with the transcription of briefs and was attacking the grist of letters. An hour yet. Time enough in which to write:

DEAR GOVERNOR: Yours of the twenty-third instant—

But the letter had a new momentousness. "Dear governor"—he was thinking out the letter, not dictating it—"we have gone thoroughly into the case of Belliard. As we originally maintained, his wife was innocent of wrongdoing. Therefore, Belliard is a murderer, both in the legal and the moral sense, and accordingly should stay in Sing Sing."

Innocent, of course. He knew her now, knew her virgin eyes, knew the white fairness of her throat. Since that first day he met her at the Ritz he had been sure, far surer than in courtroom days when her clear eyes had watched the jury. He had only to

write the letter. Belliard would stay in Sing Sing. She would be free.

He wouldn't think of that, he mustn't think of that! Not now. He must think only of the letter.

"Dear governor—she being above reproach, her husband is a murderer." That, of course. Obviously. He tried the reverse of the conclusion for the sake of mere absurdity. "Dear governor," he went on fancifully, "Belliard was justified in killing Vandam. Please free him." That would be atrocious, monstrous in its implication. The pardoning of Belliard could mean one thing and one thing only. And it wasn't true.

He became ironical.

"Dear governor: We have endeavored to gain new light on the case of Belliard. The result of our investigation comes to this: After a month's philandering, I have fallen in love with his wife. Please keep him in Sing Sing."

But that was unthinkable, even in irony. The question of his love for Clara had nothing whatever to do with the pardoning of her husband. The two questions were separate, distinct. Belliard was guilty, he should stay in Sing Sing. Afterward perhaps—First, the letter, then—

His stenographer was addressing envelopes. He must think quickly. "Dear governor. Dear governor." The girl was putting letters on his desk for him to sign. He signed them automatically. She was picking them up. Now she was at her desk again, putting them into envelopes. She was sealing the flaps. She was stamping the envelopes. And then she turned to him.

"Anything further to-day, Mr. Winfield?"

He didn't answer. She put the cover on her typewriter. Her desk went down with a bang.

"Well, good night."

There was nothing irrevocable about

her shoulder quivered. But she nestled against him.

It should have come first, that letter. Too late, now, to make it first. But it should be separate, at least.

"You'll come with me to Westchester?" he whispered.

Long, virgin lashes swept in a delicious curve against her cheek.

"Yes," she answered. "Only—you will keep him where he is?"

"What has that to do with you and me?" Nothing. It had nothing.

"Ah, Jerry; everything!"

She showed him round eyes. He tried to kiss out of them her unreasoning fear, holding her in the protective circle of his arms, whispering reassurance.

"Say you will!" she pleaded.

"I can't say that." He must keep that separate, he would keep that separate. Logically, it was separate.

She drew away from him and stood before the fire, one slim hand clutching at the mantel. Beyond the gold-bronze luster of her hair the eyes of Belliard, framed in silver, looked down.

"You will keep him there?" She made it a condition. If he didn't promise that—

"Don't you see, I can't say that? I won't promise that. It makes no difference. You will come with me?"

Her face was white and the line of her lips thin. He saw that she must tell him something, give him some reason for her unreasoning insistence. Clearly it was hard for her. Even when the tight lips moved, no sound came from them.

Whatever was her reason, her dear foolish reason, it could make no difference to them. His devotion presupposed the condition she put on her surrender. But there must not be conditions. The release of Belliard would carry a monstrous implication. So it was impossible. But he couldn't tell

her that. Nor could he grant conditions. Their love was separate. So it should stand.

Then came her words. They came in desperate resolution, forced from reluctant lips. He heard them in a daze, not believing he had heard them truly, had truly sensed their meaning.

"You must keep him there," she said, "so, if I come with you, he cannot kill you." The rest was in a whisper. "Poor Schuyler Vandam! And he would kill you, too."

He left her standing by the mantel, looking down into the gray ashes. He saw her last in the mirror of the door to her boudoir. Above the nonmetallic luster of her hair glinted the silver of a picture frame.

It was eleven o'clock when he strode into the marble magnificence of a great uptown hotel. Gay, brilliant crowds were streaming in. Came a singer whose renown reached back to the days when there were tales of champagne baths. He was surprised to see her with old Peckinpaugh, the international banker, whose taste usually prescribed bobbed hair. There was a packer's daughter with her riding-master husband, looking very English. There was old Boutelle, the philanderer, but not with Mrs. Normand Ellis. There was Mimi. She waved a scintillant hand as she passed him in the procession, on the arm of a slim young man. Mimi could fool any one when she was with a slim young man.

He found a stenographer in a marble backwater off the swirling throng.

"Dear Governor——" he began. The girl took down his words. There were introductory sentences, and then: "I must confess that there is no new evidence that I should care to submit to a jury, but, after a careful consideration, I am of the opinion that there were perhaps circumstances, after all, which mitigated murder. I recommend, therefore, the pardoning of Belliard."



Kings of Hearts

By Anice Terhune

Author of "More Super-Women"

Marshal Saxe: the Hercules Heart-render

HE was the son of a monarch. But there was no great distinction in being the child of that particular monarch—Augustus, the Strong, King of Saxony. For Augustus had not less than one hundred children, by actual count. Ninety-odd of them were born of left-handed alliances. If Augustus was not nicknamed "The Father of His Country," assuredly that was through no fault of his own.

Forsaking his lesser loves, Augustus wooed the German countess, Aurora von Königsmark. They departed on a honeymoon. Scarcely had the scandal died down when their son was born.

He was Maurice, Comte de Saxe, one of men took the form of military genius and one of the foremost Kings of Hearts of all time. Saxe was a giant. He was the strongest man in Europe, and fearless as a lion. One of his favorite amusements was to crush a horseshoe, with one hand, into a shapeless lump. Incidentally, he was gloriously handsome and magnetic, and a born ruler of men and women alike. His rulership of the strangest characters in history, which raised him to the rank of Marshal of France. His power over women

made the list of his loves read like a section of the city directory.

Saxe was a magnificent wild animal, rather than a normal man; a Greek god, if you will. It was said of him: "He did not content himself with breaking hearts, but insisted on rending them. For no woman, once loving Maurice de Saxe, was known to love another."

At eleven, Saxe went into the army. At fourteen, he was known as one of the most brilliant young officers of his father's military service.

Too many love affairs and a violent quarrel with Augustus drove Saxe from home, while he was still a mere youth. He went to France to try his fortune. At once all Paris acclaimed him its hero. Not only did King Louis promote him with bewildering swiftness in the army, but almost every woman of title proceeded to fall in love with him.

Saxe accepted all this adoration with rough good humor. He was not elated or surprised by it. From childhood women had worshiped him. He took it as his due. And he made his way gayly through the French capital with never so much as a backward glance at the crushed hearts he left behind him.

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Then, in the heyday of his career, he chanced upon the one ideal love he was to know; an affair into which he entered as a prize bulldog might swagger into a grove haunted by humming birds and azure butterflies. The story has formed the theme of opera and play and novel.

Adrienne Lecouvreur was France's most inspired actress. She was a woman of rare beauty, and artistic Paris was at her feet. Disappointed in an early love affair, she turned deaf ears to a score of suitors.

"Love is a folly which I detest!" she wrote.

Then she met Maurice de Saxe. Says a chronicler:

"She gave her revivified heart and her whole soul into Saxe's keeping, forever and ever. There were no reservations. Hers was a love that could die only with her life. At first she dazzled him. But soon the glamour wore off, leaving behind a comfortable feeling of affection, of admiration, of gratified vanity that he alone had been chosen by this peerless woman out of all the world of wooers.

"With the deft hands of a sculptor, Adrienne molded his rough nature. She refined him, made him less a beast and more a man; taught him to think. All of which added to his popularity with other women; and this was Adrienne's sole reward for her educative efforts. Saxe was notoriously untrue to her. In his rages he berated her as a cabby might have scolded his drunken wife. But Adrienne's love waxed the stronger under such abominable treatment."

Midway in the affair, Saxe's political ambition awoke. In 1725 the duchy of Courland fell vacant. The duke was to be chosen by election. Saxe announced his own candidacy for the rich post. Adrienne threw herself, heart and soul, into the campaign, though she knew if Saxe should win he and she

must part. Her love for him was gloriously selfless. She taxed her wits to get him votes. She sold her jewels and all her other salable possessions, mortgaged her salary at the Comédie Française, and raised one hundred and fifty thousand dollars for bribes to voters.

Saxe's own contribution to the campaign fund was to marry the Countess von Loeben, a fat German heiress who worshiped him. By dint of all these expedients, he won the duchy.

But Russia interfered in the mystic name of "The Balance of Power," and drove Saxe out of Courland. His German wife resented his neglect of her by divorcing him. And back he came to Adrienne for consolation. She welcomed him rapturously. But almost at once they seemed in danger of another parting.

For the all-powerful Duchess Anna Ivanovna, of Russia, fell in love with Saxe and offered him her hand and estates. This seemed to Saxe an excellent chance, the more so as Anna was about to become Czarina of Russia, and he foresaw himself a czar. But, during the betrothal, he threw away his golden prospect by accepting the love of one of Anna's ladies in waiting. Anna heard of it and broke off her match with him.

Thus, deprived first of a duchy and then of an imperial throne, Saxe again came back to Adrienne. She welcomed him as a returned hero, lavishing gifts and infinite tenderness upon him to make him forget his mishaps.

Saxe accepted her devotion as a matter of course and vented all his ill temper and hurt pride on Adrienne's defenseless head. She redoubled her efforts to soothe him and to charm the evil humors away. She never ceased her self-imposed task of making him more attractive—for other women.

"Saxe learned from the beautiful Adrienne," says Lemonty, "everything

except war—which he knew better than any one; and spelling—which he never knew at all."

In return for all this, the cranky marshal made his sweetheart's life miserably unhappy. Nothing she did was right, according to him. He was about as pleasant to live with as a sick bear. Among other things, he pretended to be furiously jealous, and accused Adrienne of all sorts of infidelities which was more than absurd in the face of a love like hers.

The actress was beside herself with distress and could only protest her complete innocence and her unwavering devotion to her ogre.

One of her letters, written to him during this time, begins:

I am worn out with grief. I have wept this livelong night. It is foolish of me, since I have nothing wherewith to reproach myself. But I cannot endure severity from you. I am suspected, accused by you. Oh, how can I convince you—you who alone can wound my heart?

Then upon the stage where the stormy love drama was being played out, stalked Tragedy—so disguised as to be unrecognized by either of the lovers at the time, but Tragedy, nevertheless.

She came in the person of Françoise de Lorraine, Duchesse de Bouillon, who fell violently in love with Saxe, and tried in every possible way to make him reciprocate her passion. But Saxe, for some reason, was not in the least attracted to her. She did not interest him, and her flattering and urgent attentions bored him.

He was quite used to having women tell him that they could not live without him and the sight of this particular worshiper seems to have enraged him. He would have none of her, and told her so.

She refused to listen and, weeping, repeated that she adored him.

The marshal laughed aloud, and brutally told her that he loved Adrienne

Lecouvreur too much to care for any one else.

Of course, this declaration was anything but the truth, for Saxe had sweethearts in every port, and his love for Adrienne had never interfered in any way with his myriad other intrigues. Still, the statement sounded well, and it repulsed the duchess for a short time.

When Saxe told Adrienne what he had said, the poor girl was in the seventh heaven of bliss. She was happier than she had been for many, many days. She loved her growling Saxe more than ever, if that were possible.

But Adrienne and her happiness were destined to be short-lived. The duchess, it seemed, was not a person to take such humiliation calmly. In the seclusion of her palace she raged and wept and walked the floor. She hated Adrienne Lecouvreur with every atom of her being. She vowed to get even with her. And she kept her vow.

In less than a week, a note was brought to Adrienne, asking her to meet its anonymous writer the next morning, at eleven o'clock, at the Luxembourg Gardens. The mysterious person would be waiting for her near a certain tree, it said. Adrienne was used to receiving all manner of notes, from unknown admirers, begging for interviews, but something about this particular missive was different. It piqued her curiosity. It never occurred to her to be the least bit frightened. So she kept the tryst.

As she rounded the corner which brought the meeting place into sight, she saw a young man in plain black garb waiting for her. As she drew nearer he began to tremble and his face turned ashy gray.

"I am Bouret," he stammered, "and I'm an inmate of the Duchesse de Bouillon's palace. I—I can't do what she told me to do! I saw you at the theater the other night, and you are so gentle, so good, and so beautiful, that

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"I cannot do it!" went on the wretched man. "I've come to warn you, instead!"

"But warn me of what?" asked Adrienne curiously.

Thereupon Bouret told her that he had been heavily bribed by the duchess to send her rival a large box of poisoned bonbons.

Adrienne hurried to the police at once with Bouret and the box of candy.

The police tried one bonbon on a poor little street dog. In less than a quarter of an hour the dog had died. As the duchess was too exalted a personage to arrest, the police officials merely called upon her and asked her some respectful, but very pointed questions.

The duchess vehemently denied having had any hand in the matter.

Bouret stuck to his story, though every effort was made to break it down. There could be only one result. The duchess managed to have poor Bouret thrown into a pitch-dark dungeon and tortured at regular intervals, until at last, more than half crazed by his sufferings, he recanted and said that he had lied about the whole thing.

So the duchess smugly emerged from the mire with unsullied skirts. She felt so sure of herself and her triumph that she resolved to celebrate by occupying a stage box at the theater where Adrienne Lecouvreur was appearing in the rôle of *Phèdre*.

At every possible point she applauded the actress in a most exaggerated and mocking way.

At first Adrienne pretended not to notice her, but when the actress came to the scene in the play in which *Phèdre* is supposed to turn to *Ænone* and deliver a scathing denunciation, she turned her back entirely on *Ænone* and strode across the stage toward the duchess' box.

Standing close to the footlights, she focused her flaming eyes on the duchess, who could only return her gaze in fascinated horror. Adrienne then de-

claimed, fairly spitting the words into her rival's face:

"I know my own faults, but I am not one of those brazen women who, calm even in the exposure of their crimes, can face the world without a blush."

The duchess covered her eyes with both hands and cowered into a corner of the box as if she had been struck with a whip. Then, still covering her face, she ran trembling out of the box and out of the theater.

Paris rocked with excitement over the dramatic incident. Also, Paris loved Adrienne and feared for her.

It is not on the free list to humiliate a duchess. Especially if the duchess happens to be a wicked and guilty rival. So, as I said, Paris feared for Adrienne.

The fears were well founded. Pitifully soon afterward, Adrienne was taken suddenly and mortally ill. Stories differ as to how the drug was administered, but the generally accepted version is that a poisoned bouquet was sent to her. At any rate, though she had plenty of doctors—who, it was rumored, had had secret orders from the duchess on how *not* to treat the case—none of them could help her. Perhaps the memory of Bouret's fate was still too keen.

Surrounded by her grief-stricken friends, Adrienne saw only one—Marshal Saxe. The giant knelt by her bedside, his huge frame shaken by painful sobs, his face buried in the bedclothes.

A priest tiptoed forward to grant her the rite of extreme unction. He began by asking:

"Do you place your hope in the God of the universe?"

Holding out her arms toward Saxe, Adrienne panted:

"*There* is my universe, my hope, my God."

As she uttered the last word, her dark eyes closed forever, and she fell back dead. Her devoted friend, the great

Voltaire, demanded an autopsy to ascertain the cause of her death; but before it could be arranged, the Bouillon family induced the police to have the body buried in quicklime.

For several weeks Saxe was inconsolable. But France was full of beautiful women, and he was by this time a national hero. He was chosen to command the expedition to England in behalf of the Pretender.

Later, he won the battle of Fontenoy for the French, and by so doing, says Carlyle, put off the Revolution fifty years. During this battle he was so ill with dropsy that he had to be carried about the field in a wicker chariot.

Soon afterward the Castle of Chambord was conferred on him and he became a naturalized French subject.

To his martial victories he continued to add his conquests of hearts. He turned from one love affair to another. He was the most brilliant, dissolute figure in the world's most brilliant, dissolute court.

Finally, war was over. After many years of gallant fighting, Marshal Saxe found himself with nothing to do. Women still adored him, but his health was gone and he was weary of everything.

His death, in 1750, brought to its close a whirlwind life, jammed full enough of adventure, hairbreadth escapes, battles, victories and love episodes

to have filled the lives of a whole army of ordinary men.

Gross and unintellectual, as Saxe was, faithless as he proved himself over and over again to the tender hearts he broke, his handsome face and fascinating presence, his dauntless courage and giant strength made him irresistible during the fifty-four years of his life.

Adrienne Lecourreur preferred to go to her death without the absolution of a priest, rather than take her eyes for a moment from the face of her lover—the man for whose love she was, even then, dying.

The Duchesse de Bouillon was driven to commit murder because she had failed to win the scornful marshal's love.

He had more offers of marriage than would the débutante daughter of a multimillionaire to-day. Why? Other men have been handsomer—though he was handsome—and women have passed them by. Other men have done more spectacularly brave deeds—and again women have passed them by. He had something else—a charm which is in-explainable and belongs neither to looks, deeds, age or nationality. It is the charm that made some men Kings of Hearts—while others were not—in prehistoric days. It is a talisman which will continue to make Kings of Hearts long after we shall have ceased to write about them.



I SAID I NEVER LIED—

(From "Don Juan's Notebook")

I SAID I never lied—yet I essayed
Often, where pity or affection bade,
The easy lie: when love still lingered on
In hers, though in my heart its pulse was gone,
I lied to save her heartbreak, till delay
And life's affairs had smoothed the ache away,
And oft affection bade me, 'gainst my will,
Still swear I loved the charming creature still!

HARRY KEMP.

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A z a l e a s

By Frances O. J. Gaither

Author of "The Laughing Picture,"
"The Birthday of Adam," etc



FISHER TELL seemed as young as most men do at twenty or twenty-five. Some said Tell must have a clever tailor, and some wondered if he did not pursue a horrid régime of diet and exercise. But the fact is he ate as his epicurean taste suggested; exercised only as fancy willed; and, as for his tailor, Tell insisted that person was no cleverer than the tailors of other men whose incomes run into five figures. Quizzed by his middle-aged contemporaries, Tell smiled and said, "How do I do it? Why, it's simple enough; I follow my impulses!"

His most recent and perhaps most charming impulse was called Edwina, or named Edwina and called Ed. A note from her lay at his plate one February day as he sat down to lunch. At first thought it was odd to see a square, formal envelope scrawled over with her hurried writing. A note seems discreet and Victorian in this day of radios, and Edwina was—well, never Victorian. He turned the note over. The address engraved on the flap of the envelope was that of his club. So she had come herself here to his club. Nothing Victorian about that! Trust Ed. Tell smiled. "Mr. Fisher Tell. Urgent." The dash of youth is good, a renewing spring. It

imparts to life a tang, a smack of audacity. He kept Ed's note unopened in his hand while he took up the menu.

A pleasant, anticipative glow pervaded him. At the next table old Glendower, heavy-jowled and red under his white mustache, bent toward dishes being uncovered before him: hot rolls, fragrant chops, green peas, potatoes mounded like snow and uncurling a wisp of vapor. Beyond, Caldwell, he of the rounded paunch, was eating pastry heaped with whipped cream. One could say of them that they fed rather than that they ate. Dullards. No fine perceptions.

"The bouillon is nice, Mr. Tell," offered the black-coated waiter doing tentative things to the silver serried beside Tell's plate.

Tell gave a balanced deference to the man's suggestion and to his own taste, to the menu in his hand and to the snow outside the window.

"Bouillon," he said. "Very hot."

Then he laid the menu aside and slit Ed's note. He held the sheet between long fingers with tapering, not too glossy nails, and read:

DEAR FISH: I waited and waited, but I'm being permanently waved at two, so I'm having to hurry off, after all. You weren't to

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be reached by phone. Here's how: If you're sending flowers, it's azaleas I want, those luscious things in pots, you know. Now, don't be restive. I don't want a garden. Only one for the table and one for that teakwood stool in front of the humming bird screen, and, perhaps, if you're feeling very prodigal, one tiny one to set inside the blue faience jar. I'm that choosing beggar, Ed.

Azaleas. The paper drooped in his fingers. The window beside him was doubly filmed. Inside hung sheer curtains with the club's monogram done in filet upon them, outside hung the veil of falling snow. Through those veils showed, dim and unreal, the opposite buildings, electrically lighted in the middle of the day, and Fifth Avenue half a block away, obliquely seen. Fifth Avenue was choked with toiling traffic and muffled figures bending their heads against the cold.

Azaleas. Laura.

"Your bouillon, sir."

Tell started. In the warm, high-ceilinged room, old Glendower lifted a nearly nude chop bone by its frilled cuff. Caldwell, lips curving in a moist, replete smile, signed for his lunch.

Fisher Tell was convicted of having lost himself in a reminiscence. Fisher Tell of all men! He shrugged.

He read Ed's dashing scrawl again as he sipped his bouillon; and after lunch, a really excellent lunch, he went out to obey her orders. But, passing a bookshop, he paused. Then he smiled to himself and went in. "Queen Victoria." That was it. That would do nicely. It was very likely Laura had not seen it, living remotely as she did. Queen Victoria. He didn't even look at anything else, just ordered it promptly and gave the address. Then he asked for a pen, took a card from his case, and, hooking his cane in his elbow, wrote a message to go to Laura with the book.

He smiled all the time he was writing it. Even a reminiscence may yield exhilaration if one acts upon it. Poor Laura. It was pleasant sending her a

book, a book that would suit her down to the ground, and putting into it a warm, impulsive message to show that he remembered Laura and her azaleas.

But when he came to read his graceful little message he frowned. Slight as it was, scarcely more than a gesture of courtesy, he knew that he must tear it up. Poor Laura. "From my club to-day looking out into a New York snow, I quite distinctly saw the Shannon azaleas and you among them in a green frock." A nice bit. And quite true. He had seen exactly that. He rather resented being balked of telling Laura so, picturesquely. But he tore up the card and substituted a plain one.

Still, even sending the book was an impulse pleasant enough. He recovered himself and he was humming as he stepped out of the bookshop. The song that he hummed was, "Believe me if all those endearing young charms."

Now, Ed's audacious behest.

The flower shop was warm and odorous with that lush, mossy smell such places have. Tell, coming in out of the stinging cold, felt languorous waves fan his cheeks. Azaleas. Sunlight and warm, green spaces and young dreams. He blinked.

"Oh—it's Mr. Tell!"

She was a pretty little thing, the sales girl in the flower shop, a pretty little thing with crisp cuffs and collar always. She wore round collars that made her cheek and chin look childlike. Fisher Tell liked to be prettily served. He smiled at her.

"Azaleas," he said. "One pot for the table. One for the teakwood stool in front of the humming bird screen. And one, if I'm feeling prodigal, to set in the blue faience jar."

She laughed.

"Then that will be three."

Nice little thing. He liked her knowing he wouldn't stop at two. She turned and slid back a panel with some pride.

"We've been getting them in all week."

"Ah!"

He caught a swift breath. Massed like that, they rather bowled him over.

"They are lovely, aren't they?" She cupped a palm under a spray the color of clouds at dawn, and turned to look at Fisher Tell. Her round chin pressed into her crisp, round collar. "It almost seems a pity to separate them." He savored the picture she made. She went on talking, something about a bowl of tulips she had carried home and then had to bring back. "Flowers seem more natural, more like a garden, when they're all in a bunch," she said, and then again: "It almost seems a pity to separate them."

"It does." He went on looking at her. And suddenly he had an idea, one of his delightful impulses. "See here, how much for the lot?"

"The lot? All three, you mean?"

"No, no, no! All you have."

"Really?" She flushed and thrilled against the glow of bloom. "Really, would you buy them all?"

"Of course."

He wrote the message on his card with a consciousness of flushed youth before him. These are the springs that renew life, keep age away.

"When I read your note, Ed, I looked out into February snow and saw a vision," he paused and then wrote on, "a vision of youth in a garden of azaleas." He took the blotter the girl handed him. He reread the words he had written. A nice bit. And quite true. He had seen just that. A girl's face among azaleas. No need to tear this card up. He set the blotter over it and pressed it with his long, sensitive fingers. He looked whimsically at the little sales girl while he did it.

"So you like gardens?"

"Oh, yes."

"But these azaleas aren't really like those in gardens, you know."

"They're bigger?"

He liked making her smile and stretch her eyes wide.

"Oh, my, yes. After years and years. It takes a generation to grow them properly. I've seen dozens at once, huge, the smallest too big to come inside this shop. And they bloom all over at once—"

"Like the rhododendron—that day you walked with me in Central Park?"

Ten minutes of kind recognition on a bridle path!

Nothing annoyed him so much as the necessity for abruptness, but he was forced to be abrupt.

"That will be all." Why must women be always wanting to dwell on the high mount of a momentary kindness? "That will be all. Please have them sent to Miss Edwina Strong, seventy-two West—"

"I remember," she said, "I remember the address."

He frowned. But as he drew on his gloves he began to smile. He was summoning a picture of Edwina receiving a garden through February streets. He effaced what was unpleasant in the wistfulness of a sales girl by contemplating that picture. He thought of people who would look out of studios in Greenwich Village when the hooded truck brought a garden to Edwina; all the young intellectuals pulling back curtains to see Ed receive a garden through the snow. Those young chaps who were always hanging about Ed's studio, smoking her cigarettes, lolling on her cushions, those chaps would envy Fisher Tell, who could order spring through a snowstorm.

All afternoon, through high windows in Nassau Street, he permitted himself to see a girl's face glowing among azaleas, Ed's face, of course, because Ed was his most recent and charming impulse. And the following of such impulses is a wellspring perennial that

Ponce de Leon himself would have been proud to discover.

When he adjusted his tie that evening he discovered that he was humming.

"By Jove!" said Fisher Tell to himself. "What in the world put that old tune in your head?" Then he remembered. "Oh, yes, Laura. Poor Laura. Glad I stopped and sent her the book. That's the way, do it while you're thinking of it."

He picked up his brushes and curried his thick brown hair. He pursed his lips and whistled. He whistled a song Ed liked, an uproarious, infectious bit of jazz.

As he whistled he looked at his figure in the mirror. As if any tailor could give one young shoulders! Besides, look at his face. He bent nearer: smooth young cheeks, firm young lips, pursed in a boyish tune, a tune strictly of the moment. Oh, Fisher Tell was young!

Edwina did not live in the parental apartments on Park Avenue. She lived, as even the flower-shop girl knew, in Greenwich Village in what was called, with more architectural and social accuracy than essential truth, a studio. Her many-windowed rooms flowed with much tea and talk, but were barren of other manifestations of studio life unless one excepted three studies in clay of a bootblack out of Bleeker Street— But, really, to mention at all the studies in clay seems both unnecessary and unkind.

As Tell stepped from the elevator, one of the young intellectuals came out of Ed's door, going for olives, he said. He greeted Tell familiarly and left the door ajar so that Tell would not have to ring.

The party was in full swing. Voices and the swish of a cocktail shaker came from behind the humming bird screen. That screen was placed exactly across the doorway so that the only things

Fisher Tell could see when he stepped inside the door were humming birds on bright, lacquered wood and a potted azalea on a teakwood stool before them.

"Gracious, Ed! Who sent the jingle?" a man was asking.

"My darling uncle," came Ed's fresh young voice above the swish of cocktails rhythmically mixing.

Fisher Tell, unwinding his knitted silk muffler, paused involuntarily.

"But, Ed, I thought the family had cast you out, disinherited you, and everything."

"Not Uncle Strong, you big nut!" another man cut in. "Uncle Tell. Uncle Fish."

Wild laughter and a girl puzzled:

"Fisher Tell's not Edwina's uncle." Laughter crescendo.

"A vision of youth in a garden of azaleas," a man quoted hysterically.

Chords on the piano, a singer joined pell-mell by a dozen more: "Don't you remember sweet Alice, Ben Bolt?"

"Oh, shut up! Somebody tell me why Ed calls him her darling uncle."

Swish. Swish. And then Ed answered:

"Well, he's an indulgent old darling, and I'm too big to believe in Santa Claus, Betty dear."

Fisher Tell stopped at the nearest telephone booth and told Edwina he was called out of the city.

Promptly the fiction of being called away flowered into desire. He dined alone at his club. His dinner was flat. He stared at old Glendower's red jowl. Ugh! New York seemed suddenly a place of middle-aged men with gross appetites and paunches, a place where youth was a sham. As through a cold fog he glimpsed sunlight and live oaks above azaleas, billowing like sunrise clouds.

With his accustomed facility, he effaced the pain of the moment when he stared at a humming bird screen and heard what he had heard. Instead, he

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looked ahead for a new and charming impulse. He was signing for his dinner when it came to him full-blown, delightful.

He looked at old Glendower, crushing his napkin to the table and getting heavily to his feet; he looked at Caldwell, rosy through the vapors of the dinner just set before him; and almost he could have laughed aloud. He pushed back his chair briskly.

A day at the Shannon place. That was it. That was what he needed. Just a day. He'd bathe in the tranquil beauty there. It would wash him clean, make him fit. It would surprise Laura, she'd flush up with pleasure. Good! It would be a dip in the fountain of youth for Laura, too. Laura wasn't a follower of impulses by nature. Hardly. Tell smiled. Poor Laura! His visits to her had long since fallen away entirely. Even his letters had become more and more desultory these last years.

He immediately sought a table in the writing room. "That's the way," he told himself. "Do it while you're thinking of it."

And so he wrote:

MY DEAR LAURA: A business trip South will bring me quite near, and I am wondering if I shall be a nuisance if I ask for a week-end invitation to the Shannon place. If it will be at all inconvenient to have me, please say so in a line to the St. Anne Hotel. I shall reach there next Saturday. I confess that I long for one day at the Shannon place, where people live graciously, for a new and perfect memory to bring back to New York with me. Always yours sincerely.

He mailed it at once. Then he thought of dropping in on Bain at the newspaper office. It would prolong the pleasure of his impulsive act, permit him to savor all its nuances, round it out with reality. Bain went back South every year. In the natural round of Fisher Tell's days, of course, he never saw Bain. But now and then he liked to drop in on him.

A stripling with down on his chin said Bain couldn't see him because the first edition was about to be put to bed. But Fisher Tell took off his overcoat anyway.

"Oh, yes, he will. Tell him it's Fisher Tell."

The stripling came back all courtesy. Ten minutes only, if Mr. Tell would wait.

Bain pushed up his green shade and shoved a chair around for Tell. Tell dropped his overcoat on the back and sat down. All about the big office people came and went, young chaps mostly, vastly respectful to Bain. Poor old Bain. Middle-aged and still on a salary. Tell felt sorry for Bain, because Bain was in shirt sleeves and a green shade at an hour when men should wear dinner coats.

"Still at it?" he said to Bain, and added kindly: "Better look out, Bain; you'll be old before your time."

Bain shook his head, but didn't answer. Then Tell told him his plans.

"Down home, eh?" said Bain. "Bit sudden, isn't it? Um. Quite a surprise to your Aunt Cordelia after all these years." This seemed subtly accusatory, but Tell didn't bother to justify himself. "Old lady's getting mighty feeble. Down myself last week."

"Last week! Did you go out to the Shannon place?"

"Um. Of course."

"Oh, then you can tell me——"

"About Laura?"

"Yes, about Laura, of course. I'd like to hear how Laura is. I'm always interested in Laura. But it was the azaleas I was going to ask about. When you were there, were they blooming?"

Bain's eyes narrowed.

"Budding," he said, and his thin lips snapped to.

"Budding?" said Fisher Tell. "Splendid! I'll see them in their prime. I tell you, Bain, it's a great thing for peo-

ple like you and me to have the Shannon place to go back to now and then. The Shannons have always had fine perceptions. Especially Laura. Yes, I think Laura has the finest feelings of anybody I have ever known. She looks on that place as a sort of trust, a shrine, you know, of something fine and imperishable."

Phrasing it like that pleased Tell. She was a kind of priestess, you know, really she was. Keeping beauty alive and everlasting. He saw himself telling her so among her azaleas. Something fine in that. Something imperishable.

"See here," said Tell, "Laura's all right, isn't she?"

"Oh, yes, Laura's all right."

"Still the same Laura, eh?" He watched Bain closely. Bain naturally didn't want Laura to stay the same. Bain wanted Laura for himself. "Still the same Laura? You think she'll be glad to see me, Bain?"

"Yes—she'll be glad to see you."

Bain was caustic, but Tell didn't resent it. He only pitied Bain. He pitied all people who led repressed and colorless lives. Tell got up.

"Well, good-by," he said. "Just wanted to tell you I'm going. Funny how strong an impulse I have to get back. I guess it's homesickness. I need just that, anyway. One day down there among the azaleas. It'll set me up, make me fit."

Saturday, standing in the lobby of the old St. Anne Hotel, he read Laura's invitation. So easy it was, so gentle and natural, that he could not believe years had passed since he had often received other friendly notes inviting him to the Shannon place. One sentence in particular delighted him: "We shall make your day here exactly like the days you used to spend with us."

He paid his duty call to his Aunt Cordelia. It was not pleasant. The

old house was dingy and the oaks before it succumbing to disease. His aunt's lace stock was disintegrating. She chose to talk of people who had died and others who had married—these latter mostly daughters and sons of Fisher Tell's friends.

"Laura Shannon's an old maid. You know that, I suppose. Laura's a fool. Why doesn't she marry Harvey Bain? Everybody knows he wants her to, comes every year to ask her. Why doesn't she marry him and go to live in New York?"

Laura in an apartment like a hundred thousand others in a city of barren stone! Laura in New York while the Shannon azaleas withered and died! Tell could hardly restrain a shudder. He was glad when he could decently say good-by. A motor from the Shannon place came for him to save him the unpleasant hour by train.

Driving out, he put his aunt's moldering house and talk out of mind. He looked at japonicas flaming on lawns, petals already dropping, but still lovely. Live oak branches overhead were green. On every hand he passed azaleas in full bloom. "Ever newer, ever lovelier," he said to himself. None of them were more than a foretaste of the glories of the great Shannon lawn. Still, they were fair. Little seas of color surging up to old doorsteps, ebbing away down garden walks. It was a warm afternoon, and he was moving straight toward the sunset. The sky hung mellow before him. The evening star gleamed through dusky veils. Fragrances never forgotten, balmy, fanned his cheeks. Azaleas.

At the edge of town a spectacle jarred him. Some one, some gilded fool, had reared a gaudy mansion of yellow brick and red tiles, and gathered azalea bushes to glow at its feet in stiff, unnatural rows. It was unseemly. Why, it had taken a generation to grow those bushes! Fisher Tell turned his head.

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It was dark when he came to the Shannon place. Its lights glowed through ancient branches. The gates swung open, but not by magic or even by patented device. It was by the hand of Laura, slim in the dusk.

"I heard the car and came down to meet you," she said. Her cadences were soft, satisfying. He got out and helped her in. Then he stood a moment peering off into the shadows. "What is it?" she said.

"I was trying to see the azaleas," said Fisher Tell.

"It's late."

"Yes," he said. "Too late now. I'll have to wait till morning. But even that is good. It's like waiting for the curtain to go up on a play you know and love, like taking up a favorite book and waiting to open it." She was silent, and he filled his lungs with the mellowed dusk. "My, this is good, Laura! It's the breath of youth."

He sprang in and they rolled up the drive.

"Here we are," said Laura.

Here indeed. White columns, white steps, brick walls laced with ivy, all illumined through the fanlight. The door swung open at their trumpeting. A white-coated negro with everything of affability and nothing of obsequiousness came to take Tell's bags. An aproned maid moved through the hall and up the stairway. It was like the opening chords of a perfect symphony. Laid forever was that ghost of fear raised by the decay of his aunt's house. Age had not set the mark of mold on the Shannon place. Here was ease. Here was gracious living.

He turned to Laura in the portico.

"Nothing's changed!" he declared, and caught her hands in his.

She let him keep them, let him look at her. She had a slender, oval face and soft, ash-brown hair. Laura was still the same Laura, still holding fast by some inner flame like a steadfast ves-

tal. She was the ageless type. And, standing there in the light from the doorway, she was exquisite. She let Tell keep her hands, but after a moment laughed at him.

"Nothing's changed," he declared again.

"You haven't seen us by daylight, Fisher," she reminded him.

Her mother sat in the drawing-room by an open fire. Her high-backed tapestried chair Tell remembered perfectly. She was more wrinkled, but her very age made Tell feel boyish.

"Well, Fisher," she said as if he had left only yesterday, "come and give an account of yourself."

He laughed and looked about him at mahogany tables, at high mirrors in gilded frames, at the old square piano, and again at Laura, slender and fair.

"My, but this is good!" he said, going to take the old woman's wrinkled hand. "Nothing's changed."

They dined as aforetime at the octagonal mahogany table. The dinner was flawless. Tell took himself to task for never before having fully appreciated the charm of cuisine the Shannons knew. He brought to it now an educated taste and found it perfect. Had there always been so many servants moving smoothly here and there? He remembered gracious living, of course, but here was an ease that whispered of renewing springs. Sprays of azaleas swept out of a bowl in the middle of the table and caressed the damask. Tell touched a blossom with his fingers.

"I didn't know you ever plucked them. I thought every inch of growth was a lot too precious."

"This is not an everyday occasion, Fisher," Laura answered.

Of course, he liked that.

"Get the book I sent?"

"Yes, I wrote thanking you. How did you come to send it?"

Fisher Tell smiled.

"An impulse. Something made me

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think of azaleas, and of course—" He completed the chain of connection with a gesture that was a delicate return for her compliment to him. He felt warm, happy. Candles, damask, artichokes exquisitely cooked and chilled, deft servants, and, smiling at him across azaleas, Laura. She flushed at his compliment. "I always follow impulses," said Fisher Tell. "I think it's the way to get the most out of life."

He expanded the recipe under Laura's tranquil gaze. He explained about expunging unpleasant moments and dwelling on the pleasant ones. Mrs. Shannon crumbled a beaten biscuit in her withered fingers.

"That's for the young," she said.

"Not at all!" said Fisher Tell. "I'm not exactly a kid."

"A mere boy!" cried Laura's mother.

Azaleas. He was already savoring morning. That bit about the priestess keeping beauty alive. He would tell Laura that in the morning about her azaleas. She'd flush up, pleased, of course. Poor Laura. Not many people appreciated the fineness of her perceptions.

After dinner Laura, murmuring something about new maids, absented herself for a few minutes. Tell escorted Mrs. Shannon to the drawing-room and seated her in her tapestried chair. She smoothed black georgette with withered fingers, and sighed.

"You are delightful, Fisher. Can't you stay more than one day? It's been so long this time."

"I'm sorry, but one day is all I have. Stupid business."

"Well, come again, come as often as you can. You used to come fairly often. We like company. We don't have much. Harvey Bain, of course, every year. But Harvey isn't—rejuvenating."

Fisher Tell laughed and bowed acknowledgment. He dragged an ottoman over and sat down at the old lady's feet.

"You're rather delightful yourself, you know, you and Laura. It's good of you, letting me come in on you—"

"Oh, you're worth it!" she declared, laughing and tapping his arm. "Whenever you want an old-fashioned day with us, just write and we'll make it nice for you—cash some heirloom or other."

Cashing heirlooms that Fisher Tell might have a day of gracious living. The hint was not unpleasant. It was incense on the altar Laura tended. Wonderful Laura!

Afterward, he and Laura sat alone in the drawing-room. Here and there among the well-remembered he discerned new objects. Fresh hangings, for one thing. Renewing springs. There you have the secret of perennial youth. An old room may stay unsullied. Laura's slippers feet touched a Persian rug, and Laura's hands lay delicately curved in her lap. Her creamy lace dinner gown with satin glinting through it contented Fisher Tell. He liked the flowing sleeves of lace slashed to let her arms show through and the tiny ribbon bows that anchored those sleeves at the wrists. He sighed.

"Not disappointed?" Laura asked.

"Everything is perfect," said Fisher Tell. And he decided to tell her now the bit about the priestess. That's the way, do it while you're thinking of it. "Laura," he said, "you're like a vestal. You keep beauty flaming for grosser mortals." She did flush, but then, queerly, she went white. "Really," said Tell, "it's the way I always think of you, steadfast to some inner flame."

"Don't!" said Laura. Then, seeing him disconcerted, went on quickly: "Thank you, Fisher. That's very nice. That's something to—to—live up to, isn't it?" Of course, but he hadn't meant to bowl her over like that. Women take these graceful gestures of kindness so intensely. "That's very

nice," said Laura again, "but it isn't exactly your own ideal, is it?"

"My own ideal?"

"What you said at dinner, you know." She was looking down at her fingers curling like pink petals in her lap. "Just the opposite of being steadfast to—er—an inner flame. One couldn't do both, Fisher—be steadfast, I mean, and take your advice about following impulses."

When the sun came through the laced branches of Shannon oaks, Fisher Tell woke. He lay waiting. A negro in a clean linen coat came in with kindling wood. Fisher Tell watched him stepping softly, kneeling with care to lay the fire in the grate. Tell liked being deftly served. He liked morning, liked sun on waxed mahogany and pleached shadows on the floor.

Azaleas. Budding last week when Bain was down. Now they'd be approaching their fullest glory. Across the vast sweep of lawn he should see them spread like a heaven of sun-flushed clouds. The grace of their undulations, the depth of their color, he would drink and drink deep. He wasn't a sentimentalist, but there was something about azaleas above all other flowers that enchanted him. Things of increasing beauty as the years mount. It would be a perfect day.

Laura. He let himself go on the deliberate tide of reminiscence. He was a youth, joyous, wanting to kiss a girl. He held her two hands, and she leaned away from him shyly, blushing against a background of bloom. He wanted to kiss her. She was eighteen, oval-cheeked. He was going to New York to-morrow to seek his fortune. He wanted to kiss her. Then he did it, by George!

Fisher Tell, lying in a four-poster bed, clasped silk-clad arms under his head and thought both backward and forward. Life moves in cycles. There is a rhythm underneath it if one will

yield to it. Every year the azaleas bloom. Presently, he and Laura would stand among them. He would take her hands. A priestess. A vestal. She kept beauty alive. He would speak to her of renewing springs.

He wished women were not so intense, wanting to build tabernacles and dwell forever in every pleasant spot. They should realize that all life is good, exhilarating. Beyond each moment is still the next. Could he kiss Laura safely? He had put in his letter that bit about business, had agreed to one day only, had been casual, had been careful to be casual. And Laura had now an air of ripeness and wisdom. Her poise last night was perfect. Perhaps— But there. Why decide? Better leave it to the impulse. Sunlight, azaleas, Laura. He'd know then what to do.

The fire in the grate leaped into blaze, and the negro stood up and turned. He started at seeing Tell's eyes wide. Tell laughed.

"You didn't wake me. I've been dying to get up. No coffee, thank you."

He flung the covers off and sprang out of bed. The rug was warm and soft to the soles of his feet. He looked down. A new rug. Renewing springs—the secret of all enduring joy! He hummed as he shaved, a ridiculous medley of quaint old measures and jazz. Ed's jazz was not painful to him, now. On the contrary, it was pleasant for him to be humming jazz at the Shannon place.

Going out, he met no one but servants, a maid carrying coffee up, another in the dining room spreading hand-worked doilies on old mahogany. Gracious living. And it was proper enough if some heirloom or other had to be cashed to achieve it. But how well Laura staged everything. She could, of course, being Laura. His visit was moving forward as he had foreseen it would move, like an exquisite sym-

phony, like a beloved play wherein one reads by one's heart each scene before it unfolds.

The French windows of the dining room gave upon a tessellated porch and so upon the lawn. Fisher Tell opened one of the windows, and then he looked back over his shoulder into the room.

"When Miss Shannon comes down," he said to the maid, "please say to her that I am looking at the azaleas."

He smiled. A little deftness does arrange the details of life. Why leave the whole drama to chance? It is simpler to plan a little. He sent her word where he would be, a subtle summons. He liked the idea of Laura's coming to look for him. His heart beat quickly as he flung back the shutters and stepped out into the sun. His step rang on the tiles. He lifted his face, got a glimpse of tree tops and far sky through the evergreen vine that masked the porch. He filled his lungs. The breath of youth. The breath of youth. He read by his heart the scene as it should unfold:

Yes. He would kiss her. He would almost certainly kiss her. Too soon to decide, of course. He must leave that to the delightful prompting of the moment. Life is an art. One's taste determines these things.

"Fisher!"

The cracked voice of age. He barely restrained a frown. But he did restrain it. He turned.

"Good morning," said Fisher Tell to Laura's mother.

"It's wet. Don't go out yet. You'll get your feet wet." She was like a raven, insistently croaking in the sunshine. She had a little knitted shawl over her black-clad shoulders. She drew it closer about her and shivered. "Really, Fisher, the sun is deceptive. These February mornings are cold. You'll catch cold."

Fisher Tell threw his head back and laughed boyishly.

"I don't have colds."

She laid shriveled fingers on his arm.

"My dear boy, wait till after breakfast. Pay a bit of court to me, now."

Patience came hard. Her hair showed harsh and gray. Her shawl was rusty. Fisher Tell patted the hand on his arm.

"Please," he said, "please! I'm as impatient as a kid to see the azaleas."

"You'll catch cold going out bare-headed." But she spoke tonelessly, as though she knew she must let him have his impetuous way.

He bent and kissed her forehead. The skin was dry and thin across her skull.

"There!" said Fisher Tell, forcing her gently back across the threshold. "It's you who must not catch cold."

Her hold fell away and her hand sought support at the edge of the opened shutter, set it shaking. Tell saw that the paint was scaling off the shutter. He looked down painfully. Cracks gaped in the tiles under his feet.

"Dear, rash boy!"

Then she was gone, leaving him aghast at the picture of tears welling out to course along wrinkles, of a shawl drawn tremulously tighter and tighter. An unaccountable chill swept over him. His skin still glowed from his bath and the sun fell warm on his bare head; and yet he went cold. He barely saved himself from shivering like Laura's mother. It was unaccountable and somehow terrifying.

"Laura, Laura!" He did not know whether it was his voice that called her or only his heart. But it was the profoundest longing he had ever known. She came. She stood in the open window between the shutters. At sight of Laura, in a soft green dress, oval cheeked, saying good morning, he laughed in sheer relief.

"Somebody stepped on my grave," he told her, "and gave me the shakes. Come on, let's go and see the azaleas."

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"Now, Fisher? Not now! Let's wait till we've had breakfast."

"Wait! Wait!" he echoed. "Don't be a granny, Laura," He caught her hand and pulled her over the threshold. "You're eighteen, Laura, and I've got to go away to New York to-morrow." She paled and drew back, but he compelled her. Kiss her? Of course he was going to kiss her. On the lips and then on the eyes, and then he was going to tell her his mighty longing. Wonderful the tide that shook him. Now he wished for a moment that would never end. He wanted to look deep into Laura's eyes where the flame endured, and warm himself eternally. "I've something tremendous to tell you, Laura. But not here, not here!"

At last he knew that the azaleas themselves had grown for a generation for this only, to frame Laura's cheeks when he should tell her that he loved her. "I've something to tell you, dear."

"Wait!" begged Laura.

How shy and nunlike she was! A priestess. A vestal. He held her warm fingers close and made her hurry across the sunny tiles, down the steps. She shrank back at the jessamine clump.

"Wait, Fisher."

"My dear, after all these years! Not another minute."

"Fisher, listen! Try to understand. I don't want you to tell me that now. I don't want it any more. I realized last night. Don't you see, really, Fisher? I had forgotten we must be changing all this while. Last night, last night at dinner, facing you, not young

any more, not a boy at all, but still talking of impulses—not that only, oh, no, not that only—it would be silly to say so—much more than that! Everything, Fisher; call it years, age—"

"Hush, dear. Hush. You love me. You've always loved me!"

Both her hands in his, tugging at her like a boy, indeed, laughing at her dear shyness. Half her life she'd loved him, and now to hold back! One more hearty, boyish tug, and the swift turn past the jessamine clump.

"Laura! Laura!"

But wait—his hands went cold, bereft of hers; and his eyes, as far as they could see, found only emptiness. Blotches of new sod scarred the lawn.

"I sold them, Fisher. I had to sell the azalea bushes to give you the sort of day you asked for."

Again that terrible chill. Her words slipped into each other, hurrying, low-pitched, denying him youth. Try to understand, she begged. Try. She had made a terrible mistake. Never seeing him, she had gone on remembering him as a boy, such a dear, reckless boy; gone on, preposterously, loving him like that. And then, last night—

Steadfast oaks weaving now, as in youth, sun and shadow on the lawn; the same far hills in haze; and a bit of shining sky; even Laura, still oval-cheeked, dress rippling along her limbs; but back of her, where the azaleas used to spread like heavens at dawn, only an emptiness. Fisher Tell shivered.

Laura said:

"I'm going to marry Harvey Bain."



LONDON has at last discovered a way to placate those stern critics of women's fashions who disapprove of the use of our feathered friends as trimming for hats. Instead of embellishing the new hats with iridescent feathers or curling plumes milady attaches a tiny cage containing a real singing canary to the side of her chapeau and trips gayly along while the animate ornament tilts his pert head, fluffs his colorful plumage, and registers his delight in the new arrangement by bursting into joyous song.

The Sleepy Girl

By Ernest L. Starr

Author of "The Worst Man in Europe,"
"Three Ways of Looking at It," etc.



I HATE the smell of flowers—flowers cut from earth and massed in trumpery patterns such as nature never meant for them, giving off a babel of odor, sickening in its thick confusion.

Those intertwining smells—I abhor the forced infusion of each individual essence with many others, faint, strong or tender. Just odor, robbed of all the single sweetness that blows from the heart of a bloom to the heart of a man. Like a lot of lovely voices, each singing its own song, each charming in itself, together making merely sound.

I hate it.

So did Ronny Shaw. That's why I tried to keep it shut into Pamela's room where the flowers were. Pam didn't mind. Ronny did. And I. But they said it was too hot for the doors to be closed. Every time I shut them some soft-footed zealot spread them wide and sent that odorous sweetness through the house, impregnating the hot stillness of the summer afternoon.

Pamela was asleep.

She had been ill and now the crisis had passed. She was out of danger. That accounted for the flowers, such a profusion of them from all their friends.

It was the most restful sleep she had ever known—and, by and large, Pamela had slept a lot during her fair young life. As a girl, I don't know how much, because my observation began with Pam and Ronny's marriage. It was amusing, then, the sleeping Pamela did. Later it was different, but that's the story.

It began with their honeymoon, when
—Ains.

Pamela locked the door of the drawing-room, went to sleep, and let him knock and plead until the entire sleeping car rocked with laughter.

There was plenty of excuse, unreasonable as the thing sounds. Pamela had been through weeks of stress—clothes, kin, and parties—such as a Southern bride has to undergo. Every afternoon a garden affair or a tea crush, every night a dance or one of those terrible "receptions." They loved her down there, all of them, and understood her. She missed them for years after Ronny took her away. There's something mighty final in marriage—for the girl. They had loved her father, too, when—as a prophet with honor in his own country—he had led his State bravely through some of its most troublous years.

I was there a week ahead of the wedding. Ronny wouldn't let me come any later, because—well, I had sort of raised Ronny. I hurried into business, Ronny into literature. The two years of difference in our ages seemed to double and treble as I made money, and Ronny stories. Besides, I knew Pam long before he did. When I introduced them I had an odd, miserable feeling that maybe I was giving him my dearest gift of all. I was right. Time proved it.

Each affair brought out a new frock from Pamela's trousseau. Ronny surprised her at first—then she got used to it—by demanding an inspection of every costume in order to be sure that his flowers for the day would be correct. Then he would go out and search until

he found the exact flowery complement of her gown. Flowers seemed to play a peculiarly vital part in their relation, even then.

He was always there to take a last look at her when she left for the formal afternoon occasions, done in Pam's town with only women guests, in candle-lighted drawing-rooms sweet with woodsy decorations. In the evening, when they were to go together, he'd be at her home an hour ahead of time. He would wait at the foot of the stairs until she came down; and there wasn't a single detail of her that he missed. Of criticism none, of suggestion only the subtlest. They weren't married then, you see.

He loved the quality of charm that makes passable things pleasing, and lovely things exquisite. For Pamela he desired perfection—desired it so much that he actually resented her failure to stay keyed up to the consummation of her best possibilities.

He couldn't conceive of one's being indifferent to the need of self-examination. He called it righteous introspection. To him, it meant being aware of every ounce of the impression one was making, finding whatever of error lay within one's self, and making it right both inwardly and in its impression on the more or less observing world.

Since Pam wasn't inclined to introspection, he thought, back in those days, that he could substitute suggestion for it. He forgot, poor yearning old Ronny, that unless the thing comes from within it gets nowhere at all in fineness or perfection. You can't enhance the apple's flavor by polishing its skin.

He traced all those little, vague, uncomfortable questions which lovers feel when they are much together to one single thing in Pam—her failure to realize the need of making an absolutely honest study of herself. The way she learned to think, to speak, to dress—she stuck to and defended when need arose.

Finish in some one else, close at hand, stirred not a whit of emulation in Pam. With her hair once done and her nose once powdered it never occurred to her to inspect them every now and then; and even Ronny knew that hair will slip and noses shed their frosting.

Rather too demanding a standard for a man, perhaps; but Ronny, remember, had spent his life with splendid things in bindings. He thrilled to a sounding strophe out of *Æschylus* as I do to a horse race or a split eighteenth hole. You would never have known his secret loves were Herrick, Blake, and Heine, not unless you pried, because he rode a horse and played tennis so well that you'd have thought his interests ended there. His ambition and his viewpoint were never thrust upon you. Yet, somehow, he made you feel the fineness, the precision of his values, the longing that he had to keep himself and those he loved alert to every pulsing phase of appreciation and progress.

This was before he wrote three best sellers in a row, and became rich in fame and royalties. He was a college professor then, the head of a halting, under-endowed department of English, with a little private income that gave him extra confidence in his approach to life and love.

Perhaps it was his profession that made him so alive to perfectness, and the wealth or lack of it in those he loved. Perhaps it was his heritage, a cursed or blessed thing as time goes on. Whatever the source, it took nothing from his straight-backed manliness, his confidence in his values, or the ardor of his regard, when once his heart was committed.

Pam was tired long before the wedding day. Ronny watched her with a lover's apprehension. He was devoutly thankful when their train pulled out and left them to the seclusion of their flower-filled drawing-room.

I was on the train, averse to being an observer to their wonderful beginning,

but compelled to get back home at the earliest possible moment. Besides, I couldn't have endured the emptiness of the big house with Pam gone out of it. It was enough that she had gone out of my life.

They invited me into their drawing-room to share a champagne cup that Ronny had produced, to pull Pam through the vast reaction of sitting still and doing nothing. Pam had her hat off. Her hair was full of the rose petals with which they had pelted her when she got back from the ceremony in the church.

"Take them out, old Fred," she said. And I found my fingers weak and fumbling as I tried. Half of them fell to the floor, and the rest—only Pam and I know where they went.

She leaned back contentedly on the sofa, talking of the day and the people who had made it lovely.

"I love them all," she said. "But, oh, how good it is to be going! Isn't it, Ronny?"

He held her hands and absorbed her gaze as if he were sure he had found the end of his lane o' dreams. Pam closed her eyes and sighed.

"You're tired," he said.

"A little," she agreed.

"I'm going out into the smoker with Fred," he said, "while you"—there came a very little pause, an inevitable hesitation, and his voice trembled slightly when he added—"while you get ready for bed."

"All right," said Pam very sweetly and calmly. "Good night, Fred," she added, giving me her cool, gentle hand. "Will we see you in the morning?" When I shook my head she added: "We'll be at the Ritz. Do look us up. Good night—and good luck."

I couldn't say anything. Just smiled like a fool. I think Pam understood. Ronny didn't notice, because he—God bless him!—was thinking only of himself and her.

We sat on the platform of the smoking car for half an hour, mostly in silence, watching the Southern fields glide silverly into the distance; saying quiet, meaning things when we spoke at all; realizing that the end of a vital phase had come, and that to one of us at least life beckoned with rose-tipped fingers. Then he went away to Pam.

It must have been fifteen minutes later when Ronny came back. I had been trying not to think, or rather not to admit that I was thinking, and what I was thinking. Ronny closed the screen door behind him and laughed in nervous embarrassment.

"I can't get in," he said. "She's locked herself inside and doesn't answer."

We tried the porter's keys, knocked and pleaded, with not a sound from Pamela. The train was a limited express, with intent to stop for nothing less than death. The conductor smiled broadly. It was clear as day that Ronny was the groom; and doubly clear that his bride, with purpose yet to be unfolded, had shut his castle door. Thanks to the Pullman Company's forethought, the door was made of steel, and yielded to neither man nor metal. The roar of the train took most of the authority out of Ronny's summons. His pounding melted in with the reverberating wheels.

Heads came out of curtains. The porter gossiped down the aisle, risking his life if Ronny had seen him do it. Pajama-clad suggesters came and went. Ronny's dignity increased as his neck reddened. Little waves of laughter smote us, and whisked quickly away when Ronny turned to face his tormentors.

The thing was mad. It was tragic. Most of all it was convulsively, ironically funny. Ronny sent us all away. He borrowed the porter's stool and sat there with his back against his castle door. Hours passed. We came at

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length to a place where even a limited has to stop. Lynchburg, I think it was, or Charlottesville. The train roar ceased. Ronny rose to a new offensive, using the stool in place of his bruised knuckles. There was something ominously determined in the way he squared his tired shoulders.

Then Pam opened the door, beautiful as a vision with her soft hair tumbling about her flushed face.

"I fell asleep," she said with delightful assurance of his forgiveness. "I'm so sorry. Come in, Ronny dear."

In September, back in his college town, Ronny took a quaint old house, marked by its sprawling roof and fat, aspiring chimneys, with low-ceiled rooms and open fires. All their things could not fill it, which left them comfortable, open spaces in every room. One they built around Pam's piano, another about Ronny's orderly, flat-topped desk, and another—opening off their bedroom—was done in dimity and blue, with wee little chairs and a Colonial crib thronged on a platform in the corner.

Ronny was almost ready to believe Pam felt and thought things which he himself was quite unable to take in. He thought she saw herself as a mighty link in the succession of motherhood, a link that must be strong, else she would shatter God's oldest plan. Perhaps that accounted for the quiet assurance with which she lived.

He literally wrapped her up in love, foreseeing every wish, rearranging his life minutely with only her desires in mind. They weren't many, but they had scarcely to be expressed. Ronny felt as if a secret sort of understanding, something powerful and strong had folded itself about just themselves in all the world.

"Tell me really this time—what are you thinking?" he asked her once, while they sat in the rose garden back of the house.

Pam slowly turned her golden head.

"Just dreaming," she said with her half-closed eyes on the leaves above them.

"That's what you always say," Ronny objected.

"Dreaming," Pam repeated.

"Of what?"

"Oh, lots of things!"

"Of me?"

"No."

"Of—the baby?"

"Partly."

"Of the plan behind it all?"

"Perhaps."

Ronny gave it up, as he always had to.

Winter came. And on cold nights of snow and wind he loved to swing his chair close to her side and read to her.

"What'll it be to-night?" he would ask.

"Whatever you like," Pam always answered.

He chose the books that had contributed to his own development. He liked the old stimulus of worth-while thoughts quickened. He wanted Pam to feel the wash of vital things through her beloved brain.

But Pam would fall asleep.

It happened night after night. Her lids began to droop, and he would say:

"Don't you like this?"

"Of course, keep on."

Soon she would be asleep, leaving Ronny the choice of continuing disappointedly to himself, or watching the yellow gleam from the fire play over her face, burnishing her hair and lighting the soft, inscrutable smile that lay on her lips.

Then he would go quietly to his discarded desk and try to work on the things which were to make them rich and famous. He couldn't get his stride because so often he was oppressed by a vague sense of incompleteness, as if the thing he had counted on had failed him unbelievably. Back he would go to her side, to cover her more warmly as she

lay on the day bed, or to pull the table with its bowl of flowers closer.

One picture he could never forget of Pam asleep, with her head on a pillow of crimson roses. She'd always loved to bury her face in flowers, drawing the very breath out of them and giving back her own in little sighs of satisfaction. This night she had taken a great cluster from the table and held it, while he read to her. When sleep came on, not unexpectedly, her head fell softly into its pillow of roses and lay there smiling until Ronny carried her off to bed in his arms, roses and all.

It was just a year and a half later that Pam and Ronny met beside a hospital bed in which lay the cold, exquisite little body of their child.

"If you'd been here it wouldn't have happened!" Pamela moaned.

"No, it wouldn't!" Ronny said, sternly enough.

"What do you mean?" Pamela demanded.

"The doctors say that when the crisis came you were asleep," Ronny replied. "They couldn't rouse you to anything but tears. So they went ahead. It was not mastoiditis, and the operation killed him."

"You should have been here," Pamela wept.

"You shouldn't have been asleep!"

"I was tired, Ronny, so very tired!"

"Tired!" Ronny cried. "Wasn't I tired when I went away? Tired with nights of watching by his side, while you slept? Would I have left him to go off and fill a lecture date if we hadn't needed the money to pay the doctors? Tired! I caved in when I was through. Two doctors put me on the train last night. Doctors—damn 'em!—they killed him."

His body shook with racking sobs. Pam came close and tried to put her arms around him. He pushed her away.

"Look at him," said Ronny, "all we had. Why didn't you make the

doctors wait? Why didn't you telephone me? You could have gotten me. I'd have known it wasn't mastoiditis. I'd never have let them operate."

"Ronny, stop," Pamela pleaded, with her clenched hands at her ears. Then he dropped to his knees beside the little bed. His head fell to his quivering arms which lay outstretched on the coverlet.

Pam was kneeling by his side, her body heavy against his own. Her fingers clutched the little hand which couldn't give back that adored, old-time response.

It took Ronny only six months to write "Survival," and it made him famous. That wasn't what he wanted. He wanted to forget. Pain that sears may be forgotten in itself through overlaying it with work and concentrated thought on other lines, but it stays there all the time, like a black, deep well that cannot be filled up.

"Survival" demanded the best of him. It sapped the feverish energies which were loosed when he came out of his first dull sorrow. It stood for readjustment and devastating self-control.

The night he finished it he was empty as a shell. He felt as if he had fed on himself for months, and now the meat was gone. Yet he knew the work was good. He was proud of it.

"Ready?" he called to Pam.

Pam had been sitting up, waiting to hear the concluding chapters. He had struck a snag, and feared he would not be able to get it done that night. Pam agreed to go to bed only on condition that he wake her if he really finished, no matter how late it was.

Pam, in the next room, stirred sleepily.

"Finished?" she asked.

"Yes."

He put a chair beside her, adjusted the reading lamp, and began those last two brilliant chapters of "Survival"—that

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bitter, satirical ending, that has been so much discussed. He watched her closely, anxious to see whether he would get the reaction he had striven for. Pam listened so intently and appreciatively that he soon forgot her, and read for the sake of the thought alone. He had completely lost sight of his audience when suddenly—he heard Pam's gentle breathing and realized that she was sleeping placidly.

He stopped. Pam waked at once.

Ronny picked up his pages, and started for his study.

"I wasn't asleep, Ronny."

"You were."

"I wasn't! I heard it all."

"You were asleep."

It cut Ronny to the raw, for this was the best writing he had ever done.

Pam was in tears. She was keenly aware of what it meant to him.

"Don't be cruel, Ronny," she begged.

"I never shall again. That's the last time I'll ever go over my work with you," he said.

The next evening he read it to Joan Tabor—in Joan's apartment. Joan wrote, too, deceptive little stories for intellectual magazines. It brought them closer together. So close that Joan began to cultivate Pam's friendship for appearances' sake. Joan wasn't subtle. Just careful. She knew men. She liked Ronny Shaw tremendously. She probably reasoned that she could even love him, if his book were a big success.

She gave Ronny the most flattering interest he had ever received in his life. She would listen to him by the hour. Maybe she really loved him. There was more than enough in him to gain any woman's love. She stimulated his self-confidence, which served to replenish the stamina he had spent so prodigally in the creation of "Survival."

Within the next few months he began his second novel. It took him longer than the first. There was much to talk

over with Joan, and the thing had to be read to her chapter by chapter. That takes time. But the delay is worth it, if one's audience is particularly and peculiarly appreciative.

Much of the reading was done at Ronny's. Joan preferred it, for reasons of her own. At first, Pam took part in the conferences, and argued valiantly for her theories of construction and development. Pam hadn't read a great deal. Joan had. Joan could quote you authorities by the page. She did it with a degree of finality that made Pam wince. Not even Ronny could answer her. So he agreed.

As time wore on they came to listen to Pam's ideas with ill-concealed intolerance, then with open amusement. Pam grew silent. She kept away from the discussions, which made Joan's criticisms shine by contrast—as well as by isolation.

Poor Pam! Thrown quite upon herself she must have found her individual resources pathetically insufficient. A little lonelier, and a little paler—that's what the passing weeks did for her.

One night she went to Ronny's room—they had separate rooms now—and said:

"Where are we getting, Ronny?"

"Nowhere," Ronny answered.

"Don't you love me any more?"

"Yes," said Ronny, "when you're awake."

He didn't hear her when she left.

Not long after, Pam overheard the conversation which brought things to a crisis. It was at the end of one of their readings, late at night.

"I wish I could have you always," Ronny said—the kind of longing which the flattered male is always on the verge of voicing.

"Ronald!" protested Joan. She refrained obviously from using the name Pam and the rest of us preferred.

"If I could have had you from the

start," he continued, "success would have come long ago, to both of us."

"Ronald!" She spoke with a good deal of feeling, this time.

"If it's ever possible, Joan, will you marry me?"

Then they heard a little noise in the corridor, as if some one had stumbled or fallen. But no one was there when Ronny looked.

"Careful!" Joan warned.

"She's asleep," Ronny laughed.

But she wasn't.

Pam could not explain how it happened. Of course she meant to take something else, something for her cold. The bottles were very much alike, and the medicine chest was poorly lighted. That was the reason she gave for the tragic blunder.

Ronny found her on the floor, just inside her door. Her nightgown was wrapped close around her, showing how she must have writhed and turned after she fell. A piece of the silken hem trailed across the sill. That's what caught his eye. He discovered the empty bottle before the doctor and his nurse arrived. The first-aid antidote was printed on its label. He worked like a madman, and brought her safely through that first desperate crisis.

"Wasn't it silly of me, Ronny?" Pam said weakly. "I knew the minute I'd swallowed it that I'd done something terrible."

"Why didn't you call me?"

"I did. You'd gone home with Joan."

Ronny looked into her eyes. She gave him a baffling little smile, so full of love and sorrow that he felt his heart almost breaking.

"The one thing now," said the doctor, when he had stethoscoped and blood-pressured Pam, "is to keep her from going to sleep. This stuff is absolutely fatal if the patient ever loses consciousness.

She must not sleep for hours. I depend upon you, Mr. Shaw, and on the nurse."

Pam smiled wanly.

"I'm quite wide awake, thank you," she said, "thanks to all of you."

The nurse took the first shift, agreeing to call Ronny at daybreak. She worked for hours, keeping up an incessant fire of conversation. Pam responded bravely—perhaps it was stoically—biding her time. If her lids fluttered she popped them wide. She drank whatever of nourishment the nurse offered, though she must have known all the while that the deadly stuff would put in its defiance the moment she let herself drop into the sleep she longed for.

Just before day dawned, she got rid of the nurse, God knows how. When Ronny came into the room after sleepless hours of wondering and regret, Pam's eyes were tightly closed. He hurried to her, caught her hands, shook her slender shoulders, commanded her to awake. He saw her lids close tighter, felt the devoted pressure of her fingers on his own, then sensed the gradual relaxation of her body as she slipped irrevocably into dreamland.

"She's asleep!" he called to the nurse, an agony of longing in his voice.

"Are you sure?" asked the nurse, hurrying into the room.

A little later she was sure herself. Every one was sure.

Ronny told me this, just as I have written it. He thinks the tragedy is his. I think it was Pam's.

Flowers cut from earth and massed in trumpery patterns, such as nature never meant for them. The house is full of them, giving off a babel of odor, sickening in its thick confusion. Pam wouldn't like it.

I hate the smell of flowers.

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Confession

By Parry Truscott.



WALKING had always been a passion with her—long, steady tramps over down and weald, with nature for her only companion; nature and the wise thoughts of those whom nature loves; who trust in her for companionship and help. This passion for solitude and movement had been with her always, from a child, and it had grown with her growth. There wasn't a bypath in the countryside where she lived that she did not know by heart every stone of the way; she loved every blade of grass as she loved and knew the wayside flowers. There wasn't a habit of wild creature, feathered or furred, that she hadn't minutely studied on her endless, happy walks.

And then had come a time when she had ceased her walks—none of her friends knew why. For she was of those who have plenty of interest to spare for the interests of others, but of whose private concerns no questions are asked.

Thus she had been able to give up the habit of a lifetime unquestioned, and, unquestioned, she had resumed it again. For she had gone out to-day, had walked miles, had returned muddy and wet, and when she sank into her accustomed chair at the fireside, no one had done more than smile at her, bringing her hot cakes and tea.

Her own smile had been so happily, thoroughly tired they had continued their gossip over the tea table reassured—and that was all they needed to be. She was herself again—the quiet, self-contained, remotely wise self they all adored.

At first she just sat there, her long, slim body relaxed in the deep chair, her slender feet to the blaze, her mind almost a blank—just dimly glad that at last she had found herself able to walk again; just too comfortable to speak or to move. Then presently she became more aware of the little group of people lingering over their tea and their talk at the round table in the middle of the spacious, comfortable room; their familiar faces disentangled themselves from her misty dreaming; their voices became the intermittent melody to her accompanying thoughts.

There were her brother and sister-in-law with whom she lived, dear people who never made her feel in the way; who never misjudged her long absences, or doubted her love. There were the vicar's wife and the vicar—the vicar had been at school and college with her brother; they had played with his wife as children; they were still like children together in their fondness for each other, and the way they clung to each other's society. Then there were

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one or two men they knew well, habitués of the house. One was the man they all wanted her to marry, the man she would marry as soon as she could tame her wild heart into marrying at all. He had come and stood over her, smiling down at her, a question in his eyes, but none on his lips. She had looked back at him—in her way. And, content, he had returned to the gossip at the lamp-lit table. It was one of her gifts never to doubt the affection and understanding of others, which was why, perhaps, she was taken so wholly on trust herself.

She was thinking how foolish she had been to give up, for so long, the walks that meant so much to her. Some cessation had been inevitable, but, if she had known, she might have resumed them long ago. But she had thought she could never enjoy walking again, until, with the first effort over, she had found all the fear and the shrinking she had anticipated melt before her footsteps as mist before the uprising sun. And the joy of the road, of the long, leisurely movement, of the solitude, of just being herself again! She forgot—she very nearly forgot—the dread of the last slow weeks when she had hardly left the house—never alone. When she remembered this nightmare of a time, it was only to hug to herself a new zest in her escape from a self-inflicted captivity. How foolish she had been! Like a sick child afraid of the dark! And there was no dark—

Over her thoughts there skimmed the ripple of their talk—what on earth were they talking about now, the dear things?

“But I should know—” This in a woman’s voice.

“I bet you wouldn’t!” That was the man she meant to marry one day. Always so direct and so positive! She liked him best of all for being so positive.

“My dear, I—should know,” the woman again—little sister-in-law Susie,

of the high ideals. “I don’t mind physical deformity, or disfigurement; our bodies are always changing, they are no part of our permanent selves. But a deformity of the mind—or even a disfigurement—I couldn’t live with it—I couldn’t—”

“If you were never told, if the discreet evildoer kept his own wise counsel, you might live in close companionship all your life and never know or suspect—” How positive he was! How she loved him for just that quality!

“I should!” The woman’s voice. “Something inside them would repel something in me—I am quite, quite sure of it!”

“A female Sherlock Holmes!”

“No, David, no. I don’t pretend I should know any details—not that. But I couldn’t be deceived—underneath. There would always be something, an invisible barrier, an atmosphere I could not breathe in—don’t you know what I mean?”

“Yes,” the vicar spoke, his voice higher than the others, professionally distinct. “There is a recognized distrust of the senses, it is idle to deny it, which is more acute in some people than we all care to acknowledge. We are told to avoid the appearance of evil, but there is a deeper need in some, the finest, to avoid the contamination of even unexpressed evil. Susie’s right.”

“A council of perfection!”

“Manifestly absurd in a workaday world.”

“I can imagine a murderer as a jolly good chap in—in his lighter hours.”

“Oh, it’s no use your joking,” from Susie.

Their voices sank again beneath the level of her thoughts, dominating her afresh.

And her thoughts had gone back to that last tramp of hers before she had suddenly abandoned her walking. It had been in the autumn. Now it was

spring. It had been afternoon, when she generally walked, and the lure of the many-colored beauties of the autumn had kept her out later than usual; she was still on the downs when the dusk began to fall. But she wasn't at all afraid, she knew her way. Nevertheless, so as not to give trouble and keep the tea going to an unheard-of hour, she had hastily chosen a short way home; a scramble down the side of an old disused chalk pit, and a cut across it, would save her almost half a mile.

She enjoyed the scramble; it made her feel absurdly young. She was just enjoying herself thoroughly without fear or premonition, when in the dusk, deepening momentarily, she stumbled across the prostrate body of a man—a heavily built, ugly looking customer of the born-tramp type as she could tell even in the failing light when he got on his feet and lunged after her—she had not quite fallen, she had only stumbled.

She had fled on, impelled by his rain of foul curses—yes, he was an ugly customer. But he had caught her up. For all his floating rags, and hungry gauntness of frame, he was a powerful man whose mere touch in its heavy masculinity would be more than a match for any force of hers. Fright, the first fright of her life, seized her as she felt him bar her way. What did he want? She couldn't make out, she did not pause to listen or consider. He cursed and he threatened—she did not know what, and she was too angry to care. How dare he—how dare he molest her—or any woman!

Large, rough stones were scattered all over the disused chalk pit—some lay at her feet. She stooped swiftly, before he could stop her, caught one up, so heavy that at another time she could hardly have lifted it, and in a fury of anger flung it at the brute. It was more than self-defense she fought for—anger shook her to the soul. How dare he! How dare he with his brute

strength, and his evil tongue, molest a lonely woman—any woman—in the unnerving dusk! She wanted to do more than repulse him—she wanted to punish, to hurt him—

Her sudden mad rage left her, went out like smoke, as he fell with a dull thud, with a low, beaten moan, at her feet. Dead—she knew at once he was dead—she had never any doubt. The time she spent making sure, as a matter of form; the time she spent dragging that loathsome, dirty body to where in a deep, weed-grown corner of the chalk pit he might sleep, undisturbed, his last sleep—of that time she had but a dim remembrance yet. She had murdered a man more in anger than in self-defense. And though she had run the gamut of a thousand emotions since, she had not touched remorse.

But she would be sorry if little Susie—well, would she? Yes, she would. But stronger than that feeling was the longing, always now besetting her, to put into words this thing that haunted her—to tell it once. Once would suffice her, she thought. She could rest then. She would have got it said for all time.

At the table they were still arguing; round and round their talk circled, on crime, on confession—some talking in earnest, some in jest. How had they hit on that subject of all subjects? Was it in the air to that extent?

Again Susie went back to her first cry, "I should know!" Some one said something else. She did not heed what they said, or whom she might be interrupting. All she knew was that she must speak.

She stood up, but spoke from the fireplace before which she stood.

"I killed a man," she said, her voice hardly raised, but steady and clear. "A tramp who tried to stop me, but I need not have killed him. I could have got rid of him with less than that."

Her voice died away and she waited

—but without fear. She had wanted to say it once, and she had said it. Of how they would take it she hardly thought.

The man she was going to marry came up to her.

"Good God, Helen!" he exclaimed. "You've got the dramatic instinct, and

no mistake!" Before them all, smiling into her eyes, he kissed her—his first kiss.

A ripple of light, airy laughter from little Sister-in-law Susie of the high ideals punctuated the kiss.

"Darling Helen—you! What delightful rubbish you talk!"



RAINY NIGHT IN A TAXICAB

SLIPPING down the Avenue
On a night of wind and rain,
Velvet darkness, dancing lights,
Raindrops on the windowpane.

Sheen of pearl and amethyst
Floating mist like silver lace,
Little figures gray and dim,
Now and then a woman's face.

In the car a stealing warmth,
In your hand your heart's strong beat
As we go, now fast, now slow,
Down the wet and gleaming street.

Somewhere sorrow waits for us,
Some day Love may wing his flight;
What care we for Azrael!
Life and Love are ours—to-night!

Beauty is our avatar,
Gay adventuring our rôle,
All the world our splendid stage,
Happiness our captured goal!

Slipping down the Avenue
In our swift and silent flight,
Hidden from the world are we,
Yet the world is ours to-night!

ELIZABETH NEWPORT HEPBURN.

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In Broadway Playhouses

By
Dorothy Parker

The Dog Days

FROM the very start, the thing is all wrong. Just the thought that, during weather like this, not only are theaters open, but people are paying regular money to get into them, is enough to make you sit down and have a good, hard cry. After all, what future can there be for this country while things like that are permitted?

You can understand why the critics drag themselves damply to the summer shows. Poor souls, they have to live, though if you were to ask me why, I couldn't think up an answer for you inside of the next six months. But any one who voluntarily goes to the theater on nights like these, and, what is more, pays to do it, should be taken on a nice long ride to one of those pretty little places up-State.

These are nights for strolling along scented lanes, for plunging into moonlit pools, for idling on cool sands, for lying in the bathtub with a volume of restful summer literature propped open on the faucets. Or, if these are too inexpensive to be amusing, there are countless cool ways to spend money. I don't say I can think of any right at the moment, but they will doubtless come to me later on.

As I dream idly in the gloaming, I often drift into wondering just what it is that makes an otherwise normal person say to himself, on one of the many

hottest nights of the year, "Just the night for a theater party!" Maybe a neglected tooth is poisoning his system, or perhaps one of his glands isn't secreting properly. More probably, though, his nurse let him fall on his head in early youth.

Whatever it is, go he does, and so do hundreds like him. And the producers keep putting on more shows for him, and it goes on that way, summer after summer. From this office, it doesn't look as if there would ever be any way out, unless the entire population is wiped out by flood, and we can get a fresh start.

Until that day, however, summer shows will go on, and chief among them will be—now you've guessed it and spoiled the whole thing!—the annual Ziegfeld "Follies." It is true that Mr. Ziegfeld recently—or at least fairly recently—announced that, on account of a little personal matter between him and the Actors' Equity, he would stop producing his "Follies" after 1924, but, at the latest bulletin from Wall Street, little, if any, betting was being done about it. Doubtless Mr. Ziegfeld's statement will go down in American history along with George Cohan's proclamation that, if the actors won their strike, he would devote the remainder of his life to running an elevator.

By way of a return to normalcy,

this year's "Follies" may be seen at a staggering reduction in price. Last season, if you remember, five dollars was the cost of a ticket; but now you can get one for a paltry four. Of course, all this has nothing to do with the first-night prices. Then, ten dollars is just a starter.

The new "Follies" opened cold, as those in the know say—meaning, when you work it out, that it opened at the New Amsterdam Theater without any preliminary canters out of town. On the opening night the show extended from ten minutes past eight to a little after one o'clock. It brought back sharp memories of the second installment of "Back to Methuselah," in the matter of running time. And it was just about that funny. Barring Will Rogers' act and a sketch written by Ring Lardner, the heartiest laugh that we got out of the entertainment was when we thought of all those present who had paid ten dollars for their seats.

Of course, the girls are there in luxuriant profusion, beautiful as ever. You wouldn't feel justified in saying that they are a particularly neighborly looking lot, nor is it probable that there are many Phi Beta Kappas among the crowd, but a gorgeous eyeful they unquestionably are. Heaven alone knows where they come from, or where they go to between "Follies," for you never see anything like them around anywhere else. Which is undoubtedly all for the best. A poor girl trying to get along has enough competition to meet as it is.

You meet the girls this year under peculiarly unfortunate circumstances. The first number on the "Follies" program is a scene called "Blunderland," during which the various knock-outs of the chorus undulate to the footlights and announce in order, "I am Miss Fit," "I am Miss Demeanor," "I am Miss Hap," "I am Miss Government," and so on practically indefinitely. The ladies are appropriately costumed, one being

lavishly arrayed to represent blue laws. And yet people go about saying that there is no satire in America!

The remainder of the show, save for a few dazzlingly bright moments, is just about as inspirational as that first scene. There is a song about flappers, with the chorus wearing the typical mufflers and galoshes; there are various sly hits at prohibition, including a song hinting that since the eighteenth amendment came into effect several ingenious people have tried making their liquor at home; there is a song about a rambler rose, with the chorus costumed—you'll never guess this one!—as roses; there is a song called "Throw Me a Kiss," and another entitled "Hello, Hello, Hello." There is a number in which the lights go out and the luminous costumes worn by the chorus shine out whitely, just as they used to do in the old Casino days; there is a number called "South Sea Moon," in which ukuleles are strummed and concerted wiggling is indulged in by the young people; there is a burlesque disarmament conference, deftly christened "The Disagreement Conference;" there is in a finale called "Bring On the Girls," and a specialty, "Songs I Can't Forget," with each show girl costumed as a favorite song of a by-gone day; and there is a ballet, "Lace-Land," with the young ladies dressed to represent different kinds of lace. These random selections will, I think, give you some idea of the radical nature of the entertainment.

But then there are two wholly gorgeous numbers—Will Rogers, with his lariat and his comments, and a scene written by Ring Lardner and played beautifully by Mr. Rogers and, oh, well enough by Andrew Tombes, showing two baseball players languidly warming up. I have heard it said that this scene needs an intimate and up-to-the-minute knowledge of the concerns of the Yankees to be appreciated. But even I, who, on those rare occasions when I

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am taken up to the Polo Grounds, am always amazed to find that baseball is not played on horseback, had no difficulty in following the dialogue, and, indeed, had a narrow escape from death by laughter. So there you are.

If you can get all worked up over a ballet, the "Follies" will provide you with two extremely beautiful ones—"The Frolicking Gods," composed, if that is what you say, by Fokine, which is amusing, besides being lovely to look at; and a Sicilian ballet, with costumes designed by James Reynolds, which is the most extravagantly beautiful thing that these weary eyes have rested upon for at least many a day. I don't say that there is anything particularly notable in the way of a story connected with it—it is one of those things showing a gypsy wedding, and as always appears to happen when gypsies get married, the rejected suitor arrives and carries off the bride—but for riotous lowness of color it is a knock-out.

The comedy that the "Follies" provides, save, as I seem to have said a great many times before, for the work of Will Rogers and Ring Lardner, may be generously rated at about D minus. Miss Lulu McConnell and Mr. Andrew Tombes do a lot of strenuous work, but as far as we are concerned they were ever as a pair of yellow primroses.

There is also a team called Gallagher and Shean, who have been playing in vaudeville to the accompaniment of cheers from hysterical audiences, but whose efforts win but a wan smile from these embittered lips. Possibly if one hadn't been hearing such great accounts of the duo things would have been much happier. But one gets the idea, from hearing people who have seen them in vaudeville tell about them, that those who have once seen the Messrs. Gallagher and Shean never want to see anybody else, but just crawl off and die if they are denied the privilege of witnessing their antics again.

An act has to be startlingly good if it is to live up to so much heralding as this one received—add "Great Thoughts for the Day." And the act of Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Shean, if I may say so in the face of so much opposition, isn't. It is an amusing idea, and you keep waiting for it to be perfectly great. Most of us are still waiting.

As far as the musical part of the "Follies" goes, there is not one song that you can take home with you to annoy the family with. I am sorry to have to talk that way, but it is only too true. Most of the songs are sung painstakingly and distinctly by Thomas Spencer, a gentleman who so resembles Babe Ruth that you feel you really ought to go and report him to Judge Landis for barnstorming.

If you are looking for good songs, and also for the spontaneity and enthusiasm that the "Follies" so conspicuously lacks, the place for you to go is the National Winter Garden, at Second Avenue and Houston Street—and it will be an interesting experience to try and get there, too. There is being produced "Strut, Miss Lizzie," which is, at least to my mind, far and away the best of the negro musical shows so far.

The songs were written by Creamer and Layton, who appear in it themselves to play and sing them. As far as comedy goes, this revue is, unfortunately, no riot; yet it is easily funnier than the "Follies," faint praise though that is. But if there is better singing, better dancing, and a cast which enjoys itself more whole-heartedly than that of this unpretentious negro revue in its inexpensive, out-of-the-way, but extremely comfortable theater—well, I'd just like to see it, that's all. And no one knows better than I that that's a weak conclusion.

And now let's see what there is to tell our boys and girls about, in the way of nonmusical entertainments. It is a sad fact, but a fact, nevertheless, that

there has been scarcely anything to cry, "Hot dog!" about since our last cozy chat together.

Allan Pollock, done with the seriousness of "A Bill of Divorcement," is trying his luck at comedy—"A Pinch Hitler," if you insist on names. Mr. Pollock is as likable as a comedian as he was in a somber rôle, and the cast is notable for the presence in it of Pamela Gaythorne and J. M. Kerrigan. But the best you can do for "A Pinch Hitler" is to say that it is a mildly agreeable little play. And you are straining yourself a bit, at that.

Then there was "The Drums of Jeopardy," made into a play from a *Saturday Evening Post* serial by Harold MacGrath, though why it should have been made into a play nobody seems quite sure. Anyway, it was, and

the results were pretty depressing for every one concerned. It was all about Bolshevism and missing emeralds and secret-service agents guarding the house and things like that. Usually those are entertaining things, too, but in "The Drums of Jeopardy" they didn't quite make the grade. Maybe it was because the characters were made to speak a quaint tongue abounding in such phrases as, "Well, I'll take myself off."

And then there came, in quick succession, "The Rotters" and "Abie's Irish Rose." Despite its having one night's start on its opponent, "The Rotters" was defeated by "Abie's Irish Rose" for the distinction of being the season's worst play.

But, at that, people who will go to the theater this weather don't deserve to see anything better.



OUTSIDERS

CAN you begin, who are within,
And free to take your pleasure,
To know how fair it looks outside—
Your golden, lamp-lit leisure?

And can you guess your happiness,
When lips to lips are lifted,
Or do we only know, outside,
How richly you are gifted?

We have our pride, who are outside,
We have our little joke,
We scale the walls of Paradise
And laugh at other folk.

In Paradise our hungry eyes
Behold in brimming measure,
The gifts you have and yet have not,
Not knowing how to treasure.

LYDIA LE BARON WALKER.

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Talks With Ainslee's Readers

IN these days of radio entertainments in the home after dinner, of spirit guidance, and of countless other advanced aids to living, it is difficult to realize that there are parts of the world so remote from their influences, and indeed from even the simpler conveniences which we for some time have enjoyed, as to be almost pathetic in their distrust of anything new under the sun.

THE story is told of a clergyman in a little Scottish village, stern denier of "the world, the flesh, and the devil," and skeptical, therefore, of anything not entirely orthodox and long accepted, who was amazed one Sunday morning, as he scanned his slim audience, to see a stranger within the gates, a man bearing a "horn," at that. Poor man, he had never seen even the more old-fashioned type of ear trumpet. Courtesy and the Christian spirit demanded that he make this man entirely at ease among his small flock. But his soul was troubled lest anything untoward take place. Fervently, albeit uncertainly, he commenced the service, one eye cocked on the man with the trumpet. Arrived at the point where the text must be driven home, the clergyman launched on his peroration, just as the stranger, shifting his position, raised an elbow as if for action. Frantic, lest the Lord's work be not accomplished that day, the man in the pulpit, scarce pausing for breath, directed one long, bony finger at the man in the pew, and roared: "One toot an' ye're oot!"

WE were reminded of this tale when, the other day, an AINSLEE's contributor who didn't understand a certain practice, timidly asked about it. And quite genially we went into detail. She was entirely surprised at our affability, and, hastening to thank us warmly, added that she had long wondered, but had hesitated to ask. One toot, she feared, and she'd be oot—of grace. And now we're wondering just how many other AINSLEE's friends, readers or contributors, are hesitating to toot, just once, for or against something that they are wondering about. And, in truth, we really like you better for tooting occasionally. Let's hear from you.

HAVE you ever known a person who apparently just by a gaze toward them turned to success even the most unsuccessful

ventures? A touch of gold, they called it in the old tale about King Midas, who, *too* successful, in the end turned even his food and his beloved daughter to gold by his touch, and so beggared himself irretrievably. Marshall was a modern Midas. And Winston Bouvé has written a tale about his daughter, Bess, which will hold you breathless in the reading. Here is no fairy tale, but a real life story about a woman whose one great shortcoming was the wealth bequeathed her by her notoriously successful father. We recommend to you as one of the best longer stories which any magazine fiction will bring you, Winston Bouvé's novelette, "Midas' Daughter," complete in October AINSLEE'S.

RADE is the house party which does not show up some one of the guests for what he or she really is intrinsically. And on the memorable one which Raines gave on the occasion of the announcement of his sister's engagement, several people's souls were rather unmercifully laid bare. And it all came about on account of the sudden, unexplainable death of one of the guests. In her remarkable short story, "Madame de Lisle Gives Herself Away," Beatrice Ravelen has surpassed even her own usual fine art of story-telling. A mystery tale that will tug at your very heartstrings is her October AINSLEE'S story.

THE next issue is unique for another reason. It will contain one of the last short stories which John Fleming Wilson wrote before his recent untimely death. Mr. Wilson was for many years a contributor, and it is with regret that we present his unusual story, "The Closed Door," without the promise of more to come. Only occasionally is it given to any one to write so stirringly as he has done in this story.

YOU will find in the next, the October number, stories also by Mildred Cram, Rice Gaither, and by that promising young writer whose work appears in AINSLEE's exclusively, Austin Wade. And there will be, besides, a generous installment of Burton E. Stevenson's novel of love and intrigue at Monte Carlo, "The Kingmakers." All in all, the October number is one you'll regret missing if you fail to get your order in well in advance of its appearance on the stands.



Inspiring a Friendly Feeling for America All Over the World

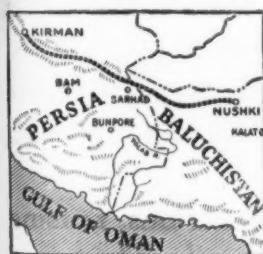
People of other Nations Accept Superiority of Hupmobile and Make It an International Institution

The high standing of the Hupmobile abroad, means even more, in a certain sense, than its strong hold on folks here at home.

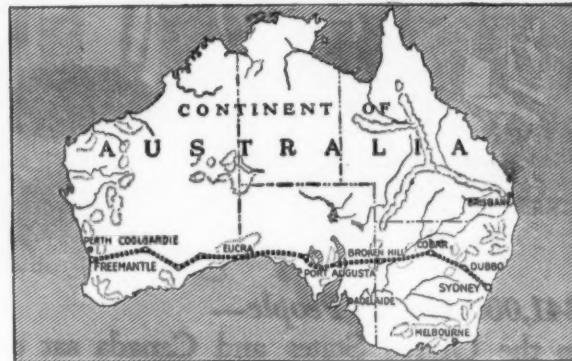
American manufactured products have not always stood well in the old world, and the ungrudging admiration accorded the Hupmobile therefore carries a special significance.

The reasons for this admiration are precisely the same in Europe, Africa, South America and Asia as they are in America.

Americans admire the Hupmobile especially because of its dogged and undeviating good service under every conceivable condition.



The dotted line shows the route taken by a detail commanded by Sgt. G. R. Cox, South Persian Rifles, in driving two Hupmobiles from Nushki, Baluchistan, to Kirman, South Persia. The first motor cars to travel this route, the Hupmobiles made the 800 miles of rugged mountain passes, rocky, dry river beds and clinging sand in 19 days, and were none the worse for their severe trip.



Australia knows the Hupmobile favorably and well. The car has been exported to Australia almost ever since it was first manufactured. The map shows the route of the Hupmobile's record-breaking run across the Australian continent. The distance from Fremantle to Sydney is 2677 miles—almost as far as from New York to Los Angeles. The Hupmobile traversed the continent in 7 days, 2 hours, 17 minutes, excelling the best previous record by 45 hours, 18 minutes.

It is natural that the people of other nations should be slower to accept the superiority of an American product—but in the case of the Hupmobile this superiority is accepted without question.

It is not too much to say that wherever it goes, there is bred an increased respect for the honesty of purpose, and the thoroughness, of American manufacturing methods.

The American tourist abroad may find more lightly-constructed American cars in larger numbers, but he can be certain that no-

where will he find another American car as highly regarded as the Hupmobile.

It must be a source of satisfaction to any American to know that American products are generating a friendly feeling for America in foreign places.

It should be a special source of satisfaction to Hupmobile owners to know that the Hupmobile is not merely the car of the American family, but an international institution as well.

Hupp Motor Car Corporation
Detroit, Michigan

Hupmobile

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It Pays to Keep Folks Well



341,000 Happy People—

in the United States and Canada sat down last year to their Christmas dinners who wouldn't have been there if the death rate for 1921 had been the same as it was in 1911.

What happened to make conditions so much better? There has been a constantly growing organized effort to prolong human life.

Anti-tuberculosis associations, welfare organizations, nursing orders and legislative bodies have all taken a hand. The results show that lives have been and *can* be lengthened by the wise use of money, and that such an investment pays dividends in dollars.

When a breadwinner is taken away—

the family is poorer. A community suffers a very definite economic loss when it loses a number of lives. It increases the cost of living to have workers die needlessly. It increases taxes—to say nothing of the sorrow and unhappiness involved.

It Pays to Keep Folks Well

As soon as people realize—

that the wealth of the nation depends upon the men and women who make up the nation, the tremendous financial importance of prolonging human life becomes clear to everybody.

The United States is said to be the richest country in the world. Take every man and woman away and what would it be worth? Not so much as it was when the red Indians owned it.

Even the unskilled laborer who works his full life-time makes the nation richer by several thousand dollars. It follows, therefore, that down to the smallest tax payer in the last small community, everybody is better off when lives are saved.

The work already done—

has saved the lives of fathers, mothers and children.

Saving fathers keeps families from becoming dependent.

Saving mothers helps to hold families together and keeps children out of public institutions.

Saving children adds to the future wealth of the nation.

Protected Health means fewer deaths. Fewer deaths mean fewer policies to pay.

Just among the Metropolitan's 14,000,000 policy holders who paid their premiums weekly, there were 55,000 fewer deaths in 1921 than there would have been under the death rate prevailing ten years before. Take the figures home to yourself. Suppose you are a Metropolitan policy holder—one of these 55,000 saved from death—your family is richer by the money you earned in 1921 and has been saved expenses incident to illness and death.

Other Metropolitan policy holders have been benefited by the premiums you paid in 1921, just as you have benefited by other lives saved.

The nation is better off for your contribution to the Country's wealth in 1921.

And, best of all, your family and friends are richer and happier by the fact that you yourself are still alive.

The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company will send its booklet, "How to Live Long," to anyone who asks for it.

HALEY FISKE, President



Published by
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It closes like a bull-dog's jaw

HOW many times have you seen some woman carrying a bag with the catch unsnapped, its contents ready to fall out, an invitation to prying fingers.

An Evertite Bag can't open accidentally. Once it is closed, it stays closed till you open it. And it's just as convenient as it is safe. Simply draw the slide to the right and it's open. Draw it to the left and it's closed—closed so securely that the tiniest object can't slip out—closed like a bulldog's jaw.

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Your dealer will be glad to show you Evertite Bags. If, however, he can't supply you, send us his name and \$3.50 and we will send you the bag, illustrated above, postpaid. Made in black, brown and gray; size $8\frac{1}{2} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$.

Also Evertite Purses, Collar Bags, Collectors' Cases and Novelty Hand Bags.

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Two tires for less than the usual cost of one, and a **free inner tube with each tire!** No doubts or second tires. Our big volume means best tire values. Act now and our tire experts will help you. Many of steady customers are getting full mileage out of these tires and you, too, can get **12,000 MILES**

1 You can see the mileage in our tires. Order and prove it—but order now! This is a special lot selected for recom-brecking sale. Supply limited and going double quick.

Not the Bargain Prices on Two Tires of Same Size:

Size	1 Tire	2 Tires	Size	1 Tire	2 Tires
20 x 3	\$ 7.25	\$11.95	32 x 4 1/2	\$13.45	\$21.45
20 x 3 1/2	8.25	13.95	33 x 4 1/2	13.95	22.45
22 x 3 1/2	9.45	15.45	34 x 4 1/2	14.45	23.45
22 x 4	10.50	16.50	35 x 4 1/2	15.00	23.50
22 x 4 1/2	11.35	17.75	36 x 4 1/2	15.45	23.45
23 x 4	12.45	20.90	33 x 5	15.65	23.65
24 x 4	13.25	21.95	35 x 5	15.90	23.85
26 x 4	14.95	25.95	37 x 5	16.45	26.45

SEND MONEY! Shipment by U. S. D. express or rail post. Examining tires on arrival. If not to your satisfaction return same at our expense and your money will be promptly refunded. State whether straight side or clincher. **DON'T DELAY! ORDER NOW!**

ALBANY TIRE & RUBBER COMPANY
8721 Roosevelt Road Sept. 1911-K Chicago, Illinois

HAVE YOU EVER READ
Picture-Play Magazine!
BUBBLING OVER WITH SCREEN NEWS

"DON'T SHOUT"



"I can hear you with the MORLEY PHONE." It is invisible, weightless, comfortable, inexpensive. No metal, wires nor rubber. Can be used by anyone, young or old.

The Morley Phone for the

DEAF

Is to the ears what glasses are to the eyes. Write for Free Booklet containing testimonial of over 1000 cases of complete recovery. It describes causes of deafness; tells how and why the MORLEY PHONE affords relief. Over one hundred thousand sold.

THE MORLEY CO., Dept. 758, 26 S. 15 St., Phila.

7 Diamond Solitaire Cluster \$5.00 A Month

Seven perfectly cut, blue white Diamonds are so closely set in Platinum, and are exquisite in the workmanship that the solitaire resemblance is actually startling. Looks like a single 2 ct. Diamond. Don't send us a penny—we'll send the ring entirely FREE. If satisfied, pay \$5.00, then send the balance ten months, \$5.00 a month. If not satisfied, return.

FREE De Luxe Diamond Book showing over 2,000 Bargains in Diamonds, Watches and Jewelry—ten months to pay on everything. Write to Dept. 182-P.

CAPITAL \$1,000,000

"THE HOUSE OF QUALITY"
L.W.SWEET INC.
1650-1660 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

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Velvet Grip

Hose Supporters

both hold and protect the thinnest gauze stockings. The Oblong All-Rubber Button clasp—an exclusive feature of the Velvet Grip—will not rip or tear the sheerest hosiery.

Regardless of your manner of corseting, you will find it worth while to insist on having Velvet Grip Hose Supporters on your favorite corset.

Sold Everywhere

GEORGE FROST CO., BOSTON, Makers of
Velvet Grip Hose Supporters
for All the Family

SELL YOUR SPARE TIME

You can earn \$15 to \$50 a week writing show cards in your own home. No canvassing. A short, pleasant occupation which you can learn by our new simple graphic block system. Artistic ability not necessary.—We teach you how, and supply you with work.—Distance no object. Write for free information.

WILSON METHODS LIMITED—DEPT. H

64 East Richmond, Toronto, Canada.

Easy to Play Easy to Pay

BUESCHER

True-Tone

Saxophone

Easiest of all wind instruments to play and one of the most beautiful. You can learn the scale in an hour's practice and play popular music in a few weeks. You can join a band or play in a band within 90 days if you so desire. Unrivalled for home entertainment, church, lodge or school. In big demand for orchestra and band work. The portrait above is of Donald Clark, Soloist with the famous Paul Whiteman's Orchestra.

Free Trial You may order any Buescher instrument on trial, without paying one cent in advance, and try it six days in your own home, without obligation. If perfectly satisfied, pay for it on easy payments to suit your convenience. Mention the instrument interested in and a complete catalog will be mailed free.

BUESCHER BAND INSTRUMENT CO.
Makers of Everything in Band and Orchestra Instruments
4234 BUESCHER BLOCK, ELKHART, INDIANA

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Model 333 Stevens double-barrel shotgun. RETAIL PRICE, including tax, \$32.40. Other models \$19.50 to \$36.00.



Stevens "Favorite", 24-in. take-down; .22 long rifle, .22 short, .25 Stevens and .32 long rim-fire. RETAIL PRICE, including tax, \$9.85. Other models ranging from \$5.40 to \$23.50.

From grandfather to father — to son

For three generations Stevens has built shotguns and small bore rifles for the American sportsman.

For three generations the accuracy and endurance of Stevens guns have remained unsurpassed.

You can buy a more expensive gun than a Stevens; but you cannot buy better shooting qualities. *Shotgun or rifle—a Stevens firearm is accurate.*

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For rifling, Stevens uses a special process, slow scraping system removing less than the thirtieth part of a thousandth of an inch with each pass of the rifling cutter.

A slow method—but when finished a Stevens barrel is accurate.

When you buy a Stevens you are buying unequalled shooting qualities and you are paying a reasonable price.

Stevens manufactures a complete line of small bore rifles and shotguns of every description. Ask at your dealer's or write for the interesting catalog describing in detail our complete line. Address:

J. STEVENS ARMS COMPANY
Department C119

Chicopee Falls, Mass.

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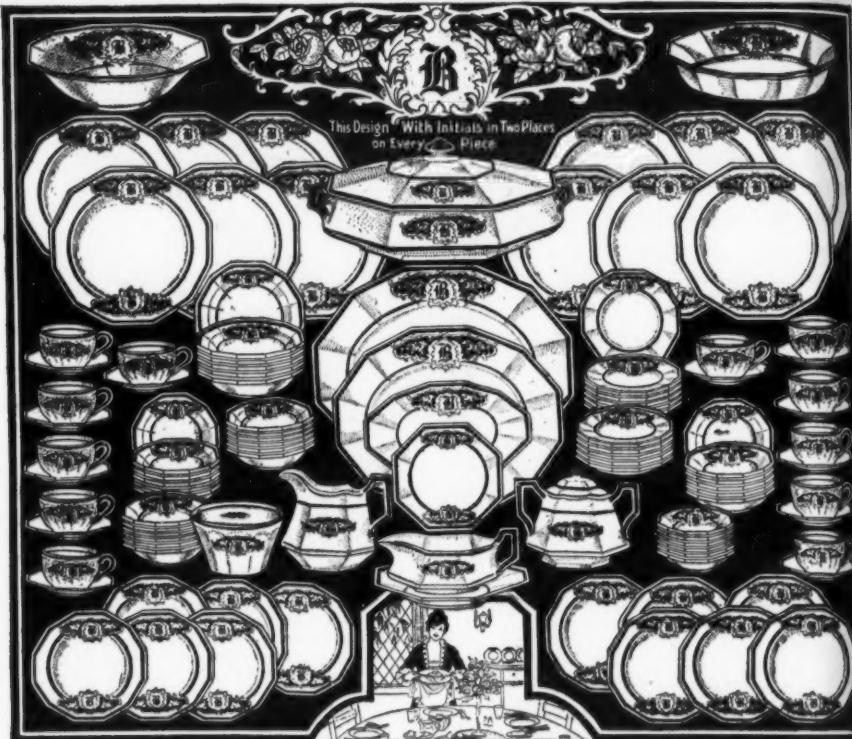
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This Superb 110-piece Set, with initials in 2 places in wreath with 5-color decorations on every piece and gold covered handles, consists of:
 12 Dinner Plates, 9 inches
 12 Salad Plates, 7 inches
 12 Bread and Butter Plates, 7 inches
 12 Cups
 12 Saucers

12 Soup Plates, 7½ inches
 12 Cereal Dishes, 8 inches
 12 Fruit Dishes, 8½ inches
 12 Individual Bread and Butter Plates, 6¼ inches
 1 Platter, 18½ inches

1 Platter, 11½ inches
 1 Celery Dish, 8¾ inches
 1 Sauce Boat Tray, 7¾ inches
 1 Butter Plate, 6 inches
 1 Vegetable Dish, 10½ inches, with lid (2 pieces)

1 Deep Bowl, 8¾ inches
 1 Oval Baker, 9 inches
 1 Oval Deep Bowl, 5 inches
 1 Gravy Boat, 7½ inches
 1 Creamer
 1 Sugar Bowl with cover

368-Pages

Brings 110-Piece Gold Decorated Martha Washington Dinner Set

Send only \$1 and we ship the full set—110 pieces. Use it 30 days. Then if not satisfied, return them and we refund your \$1 and pay transportation charges both ways. If you keep them, take nearly a year to pay on easy terms.

Your Initial in 2 Places on Every Piece; 5-Color Floral Decorations and Gold

Wonderful artistic effect is given by the wreath and rich design surrounding the initial. Your initial appears in 2 places on every piece.

All Handles Covered with Gold

Every handle is covered with polished gold. Shipping weight about 90 lbs.

Order No. 324DDMA13. Bargain price, \$32.95. Pay \$1 now, \$3 monthly.

HARTMAN Furniture & Carpet Co.
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HARTMAN FURNITURE & CARPET CO.
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I enclose \$1.00. Send 110-piece Golden Martha Washington Dinner Set No. 324DDMA13. I must have 90 days' free trial. If not satisfied, will return them and will refund my \$1. If I keep them, I will pay \$3.00 per month until full price, \$32.95, is paid. Title remains with you until final payment is made.

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Street Address _____

R. F. D. _____

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State _____

Color _____

Give Initial Wanted (Any One Letter) _____

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Eveready Spotlight
with the
300-ft Range



There's an Eveready Flashlight complete for every purpose from \$1.35 to \$4



WATCH YOUR STEP—AN EVEREADY FLASHLIGHT PREVENTS ACCIDENTS

Carry an Eveready Spotlight every night!

The 300-ft. electric beam of this Eveready Spotlight *prevents* accidents by revealing danger. For motorists it's as necessary as a spare tire, to read road signs and meet emergencies; a perfect portable light for campers and Boy Scouts; for motor boating, canoeing, rowing; for every vacation need.

MONEY-BACK OFFER

Try out this wonderful Eveready Spotlight. Buy one of any dealer for \$3.75. Use it over night, flashing its 300 ft. beam near and far. If you want to return it next day, the dealer will refund your money without argument. (Frankly, you will keep it. No one wants to part with an Eveready Spotlight after trying it out.)

For sale everywhere at electrical, hardware, sporting goods, drug, and auto accessory shops; garages; general stores.



Eveready Flashlight Batteries give brighter light, last longer; fit and improve all makes of flashlights

EVEREADY
FLASHLIGHTS
& BATTERIES



Save the Enamel of Your Teeth

THE thin coating of enamel upon your teeth is Nature's protection against decay. If it is damaged or scratched away, it never can be restored.

Save the enamel of your teeth by avoiding the use of pastes that contain harmful acids or are dangerously gritty.

COLGATE'S CLEANS TEETH THE RIGHT WAY

"Washes" and Polishes—Doesn't Scratch or Scour

Colgate's Ribbon Dental Cream is a double-action dentifrice. Its principal ingredients are fine precipitated chalk and pure vegetable oil soap. The fine chalk loosens clinging particles; the pure soap washes them away.

Highest authorities agree that Colgate's is safe for habitual use. It cleans teeth thoroughly, without injury to the enamel or mouth tissues—all that a dentifrice should be expected to do. Large tubes 25c. Why pay more?

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